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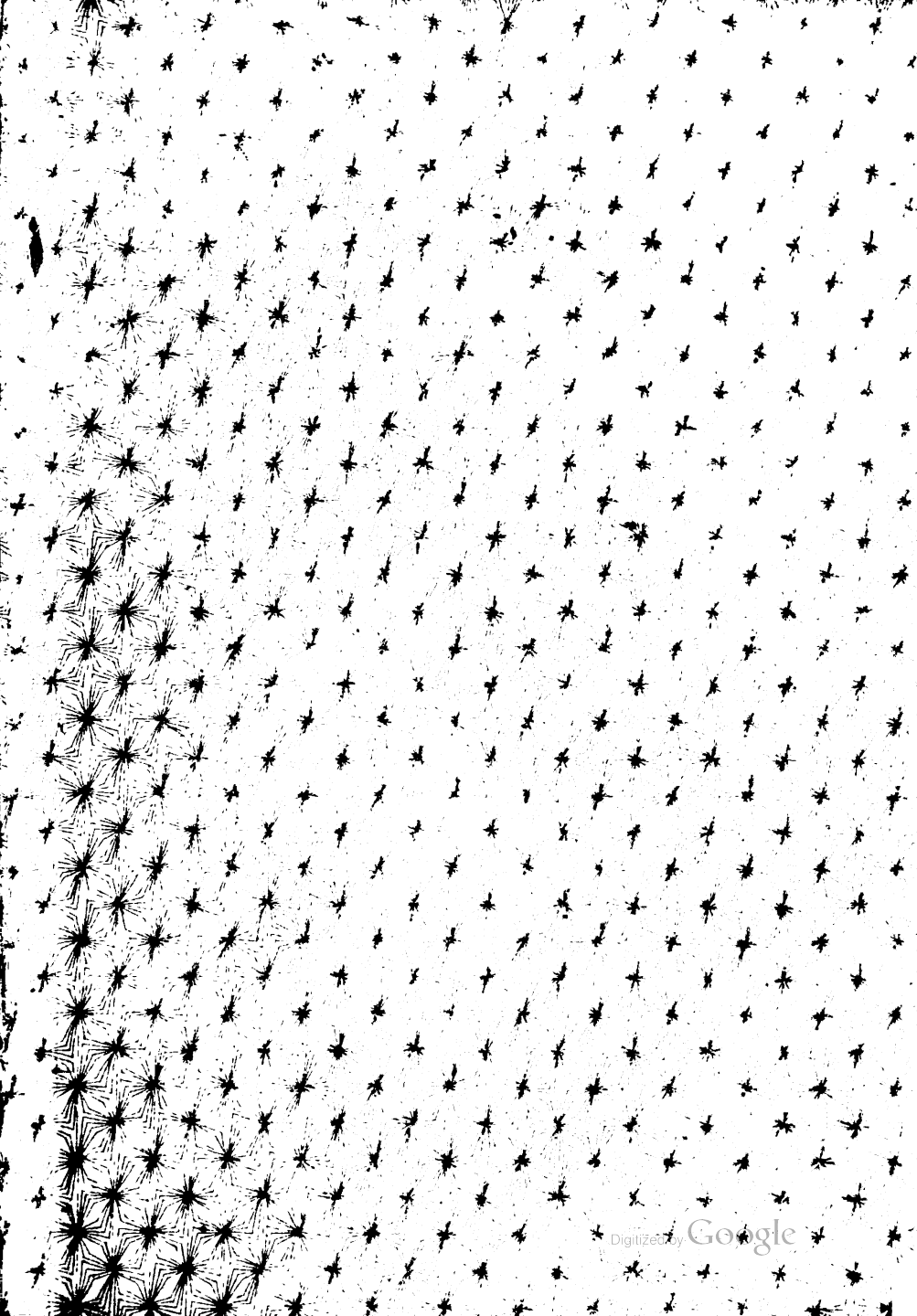
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THE WAY OF LIFE.

BY

GEORGE S. MERRIAM.

Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

BOSTON:
GEO. H. ELLIS, 141 FRANKLIN STREET.
1887.

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THE word unto the prophet spoken
Was writ on tables yet unbroken;
The word by seers or sibyls told,
In groves of oak or fanes of gold,
Still floats upon the morning wind,
Still whispers to the willing mind.
One accent of the Holy Ghost
The heedless world hath never lost.

EMERSON.

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I.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS little book consists of two parts, which were written at an interval of three years. The first part is the chapter on the character of Jesus, and the second is the Letters which make up the rest of the book. The former was the outcome of a study of the New Testament, in which had culminated a long course of inquiry — such as so many thoughtful men are constrained to make in these days — as to what elements of Christianity are to be held as true and permanent, and what must be regarded as transitory and for us no longer serviceable. The conclusion I reached was, in substance, that the vital legacy which we receive from the Christianity of the past is embodied in the character of Christianity's founder. That character I described as it presented itself to me. I looked upon Jesus as a man only, with no superhuman nature or miraculous powers, but having in himself the elements of character which give to life its value and its true significance. I found myself of course at variance with the great body

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of the Christian Church, in discarding the elements of incarnation and miracle. But I also was (and am) still further from sympathy with another class, who not only reduce Jesus to the level of man, but interpret his goodness as having validity and substance only in the circle of purely human relations, and treat as visionary and unreal his communion with infinite deity. To us, it seems to me, the "first and great commandment"—the soul's allegiance to a spiritual power, its source, its God, its home —remains still the first law, the deepest necessity, of human nature. Jesus is still to us the son of God,—the first-born, though not the only begotten. As revealing to us that we also are sons of God, and showing us how to fulfil that high destiny, his life has still its chief significance.

So again as to the resurrection. The impression came to me irresistibly, as I read and pondered the accounts of it, that these physical appearances were the birth of a Jewish imagination. But there comes also this impression,—that the bodily resurrection, like the miraculous conception, is to us as a parable, under which lies an immortal truth. The human son of Joseph and Mary was truly a son of God. So, not less truly, the holy soul

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passes through what we call death to a higher estate. And now, as in old days, the most vivid token of that higher life is the revelation which comes to those who, beside the empty sepulcher of a friend, receive the heart-filling revelation, "He is risen, he is not here,—he hath ascended unto his Father and your Father, unto his God and your God."

This paper, then, on the character of Jesus, was written, laid aside, and three years later was published in the Springfield Republican. It occurred to me then to follow it with a series of letters, in the same paper, not in support or justification of the article, nor with any discussion of historical or theological questions, but dealing in the simplest and directest way with the question *how to live*, as it comes to men and women to-day,—how to live successfully and victoriously. These letters in themselves need little preface or explanation. They tell their own story.

But as I now put them together with the previous article into the more permanent form of a book, I feel that a farther word is due, as to the relation which I believe that the person and character of Jesus bear to the practical business of living as it presents itself to us to-day. In a word, I take it that the "way of

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life" remains for us the same, whether he was or was not such a man as he is here supposed to have been. The truth which he taught would have been just as true, even if he had never taught it. The life of purity, holiness, and love, which we impute to him, is just as worthy of our seeking, whether he attained it perfectly or not. It is our perception of the supreme value of these qualities, not our belief that Jesus possessed them, that rightfully gives law to our lives. What we have come to understand by the Christ-life — that is, the life of absolute allegiance to duty, sympathetic love to all living creatures, and perfect trust in an all-ruling good — is still for us the true life, whether Jesus of Nazareth exemplified it in a greater or a less degree; whether or not he mixed this conception of religion with lower and transitory conceptions; whether he set forth a purely spiritual religion, or in addition looked for a superhuman Messianic kingdom upon earth.

In other words, I think we cannot regard the historical Jesus as the *corner-stone* of our religion. It narrows and confuses our inquiry into the true law of life, when we limit its scope to the interpretation of this single figure. Such a limitation is only legitimate for those in

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whose eyes the figure is superhuman. For us, the search for truth is not to have limits imposed upon it in the name of Jesus. In that sense, we can call no man master, not even him. *Whatsoever* things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, these we must seek, whether they are included in our conception of Jesus or not. Even that spiritual faith of which his name is a symbol,— that inward assurance of divine realities beyond the senses' fathoming, and a destiny sublimer than reason can demonstrate or comprehend,— even this faith, which is now so sharply on trial, must be verified, if at all, not by appeal to the authority of Jesus, but within the living heart and mind of the world. Whatever changes in our religious beliefs, in our ideals of character and society, or in our conceptions of Deity, are dictated by our soberest reason, our widest observation, our deepest experience, these we will accept.

But, in the whirl of new thought which in these present days often confuses and distresses us, it is good to look calmly and steadily at that glorious ideal which the past has bequeathed to us under the name of Jesus. In using the word "ideal," I recognize that in that portraiture we are looking upon something other and higher than any one man, even Jesus, ever achieved.

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It is a portrait that has been idealized by the love and veneration of eighteen centuries. Whatever trait of fidelity, heroism, sacrifice, tenderness, faith, has risen upon the vision of hearts schooled in experiences of love and anguish and triumph, has been attributed to the divine Christ, and has blended with the portrait handed on in growing radiance from age to age. Most of us can no longer read the words of the Gospels as they were first written: they have been struck through by the prayers, the tears, the smiles, the sacramental joys and agonies of uncounted hearts. It is beyond question that Jesus himself was a man of true nobility and profound moral insight. It is even possible that he possessed qualities of greatness, originality, and truth, which are lost to us beyond recovery, because they were too high or too fine for his disciples to comprehend and record. But the figure which now rises before us under his name has been enriched beyond the measure of any single personality. Even as we read the Gospels, we unconsciously and inevitably *select*, passing lightly over what is uncongenial to our feeling or thought, and fixing on that as characteristic which to us is beautiful and inspiring. The Christ whom the Church worships has in some degree grown up, though upon a firmer

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basis, by a process like that which has created in the Catholic Church the ideal of the Virgin Mary. Unhistorical as we consider that ideal, it has done immeasurable service: it expresses immortal truth in its exaltation of motherhood, and love made perfect through suffering. Upon the initial fact of a greater personality, with more various elements and a larger outline, has grown up our ideal of Christ.

It is undoubtedly with some pain, and at first some loss, that we surrender the belief that one man really *was* all that our highest thought of humanity includes. But, when at the sacred call of truth that surrender has been made, we find great compensations coming to us. We are free of all the vexing questions of historical criticism. They may be our servants, they are no longer our masters. Let the students of history work out at their leisure the problems of the life of Jesus. We follow them with interest; but it is no longer our ideal of manhood, no longer our faith in God, that is at stake upon their labors. That ideal and that faith are to rest upon a wider, deeper foundation,— upon the world's experience, the comradeship of all loyal souls, the witness of our own hearts.

When I first wrote the chapter upon the

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character of Jesus, I was aiming at historical portraiture, and did not recognize how largely the ideal element must necessarily enter into the work. That perception has come to me later, and I have somewhat modified and amplified the chapter since its first publication. But, even as it now stands, its emphasis is laid rather upon the ideal than the strictly historical character of Jesus. Its presentation has, I well know, little or no element of original thought. It is but a combination, in slightly different form, of elements which are familiar,— one portrait among a thousand, only without the garment of miracle or the aureole of incarnate Godhead. Nay, its very value is that it is *not* original, it is not the poor single thought of one. It is (however imperfectly I may have expressed it) humanity's highest thought of itself,— the vision of divine manhood, the promise of man's future attainment, as it has been slowly shaped by

> "The prophetic soul
> Of the wide world, dreaming on things to come."

Or, in another aspect, we may say that this portraiture is a history, as it were in epitome, of what has really existed, not concentrated in one, but diffused in millions. Traits like these, acts like these, have been in many lives. There

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is not an heroic lineament, not a winning grace, but has to-day its counterpart in some human soul, perhaps in many. If, when we say that the real Jesus was less than we have imagined him, there seems at first to be a loss out of our moral world, let us bethink ourselves of the multitude that no man can number who have been inspired, each in his degree, by a courage, a love, a faith, akin to that of Jesus. If we no longer see divinity perfectly incarnated in one, we see it diffused in many,—as, when the sun disappears from our sky, uncounted stars shine out.

If I had been attempting a purely historical study, it would be necessary to pass upon much that I have omitted. It would in that case be necessary to discuss at length the origin of the miraculous features in the narrative. Especially, it would be needful to consider carefully whether Jesus entertained the expectation of his own second coming in the flesh and the setting-up of a Messianic kingdom on earth, which his disciples certainly looked for. It is my impression that for a time at least he did entertain that expectation, and that, with the purely spiritual teachings which I have almost exclusively regarded in the portraiture, there mingled in the later period of his life a differ-

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ent vein of anticipation, which deeply affected the character not only of the early Church, but of the whole historic development of Christianity. To consider and decide such questions is part of the serious work of historical criticism. But it is not with historical criticism that I am primarily concerned. I take from its results only so much as seems to me to have an important bearing — whether welcome or unwelcome — upon our own religious life. The rest I leave to the fitter hands in which it belongs. It is as an *ideal* that I have used the character of Jesus; and, further, I fully recognize that it is not to be regarded as supplying to us a complete and exhaustive ideal. The circumstances of his time and of ours differ too widely for that. Some virtues that for us are of high importance we shall not find set forth in the New Testament or included in the amplest and loftiest conception of the character of Jesus. A moral ideal which rests on an original historic basis has of necessity some limit to its flexibility. Thus, for example, under the laws of the universe as we now understand them, the purification of our social order demands an active civic virtue, such as was unrecognized while the hope was present of a catastrophic divine intervention for the righting of human-

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ity. That political quietism which was a necessity and a virtue in the first centuries of our era must be exchanged for a widely different temper when the active administration of the State has become one of the highest responsibilities of the citizen. So, too, the new aspect of the universe and of man to which modern science is introducing us is likely to modify, in ways we cannot fully forecast, our thought of Deity. And so, again, the holding of our religious beliefs subject to whatever changes may be legitimately required of us by new light imposes on the intelligent conscience a most arduous discipline, in which it will get little direct assistance from the precepts of the New Testament or the historic ideals of Christianity.

Yet, other assistance will be given to humanity in its need. The line of seers never ends. Not even in Jesus did humanity find its consummation. Not even in the Christ-ideal are its possibilities exhausted. The martyrs of an earlier age gave their bodies to be burned, as though passing in a swift, flaming chariot into endless glory. Our age witnesses sublimer martyrdoms, in men who will follow Truth even though she should lead them away from hope and consolation. In signs and omens ancient Israel and old Christendom saw the hand

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of its God. But upon our day is breaking the spectacle of an ordered universe, marching without pause or break along its appointed road. It is an apocalypse so sublime that our eyes are yet almost blinded by excess of light. The prophecies of earlier days seem baffled, the ancient tongues no longer teach as of old, antique knowledge gives place before the new. Yet steadfast in true hearts abide the immortal three,—faith, hope, and love; and still the greatest is love.

The letters which make up the greater part of this book speak their own message,—a message simple and scarcely needing comment or preface. A friend of mine, called to preach before a ministerial assembly convoked to discuss high and abstruse themes, said to me, "I am going to give them just as *bread-and-butter* a sermon as I know how." With a like disposition, I have tried to say something fit to serve as "human nature's daily food." Thinking of that "way of life" as it stands forever open and inviting,—a Pilgrim's Progress, truly, through Vanity Fair and past beguiling bowers of ease, with its Giant Despair, its Apollyon, its Valley of the Shadow of Death; yet always through a Father's country, offering, even as we journey, divine beauty to the eye and divine

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joy to the soul,—thinking, I say, of this, there come to me in close conjunction two words, one from Jesus and one from his ancestral Hebrew religion. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"; one of those deep comments on human life, sorrowful enough, but not for its sorrow withheld, wherein, as in so many others, Jesus the living man stands before us, with an eye that read humanity in its depths and a voice whose words went home to their mark. Yes, the gate is strait! Great is the load we must lay aside to enter there,—pride, ambition, excess, the false gods of intellect-worship, the ever-present, insidious selfishness. Narrow is the way! How easily, how constantly we step aside, and fall below our best thought, below our best self! And, saddest of all, "few there be that find it." Not many do we see before whom our hearts cry out: "They have found the secret! They are truly living!" And yet to recognize these true conquerors and saints,—more numerous than we sometimes think, most numerously found when in ourselves we carry something of that true quality to which its own makes answer as iron answers to magnet,—to know these true sons and daughters of God, and to see even in the low-

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est some germ and promise of that high estate, is part of our privilege and joy as we walk the way of life. A strait gate, a narrow way? Yes. But, ah! "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." The way of life is rightfully the way of *joy*. That, too, Jesus knew. That was a great part of the disclosure which he made, and which breaks out sometimes from his words with heavenly radiance, which his followers have almost shut out with a sort of deification of woe. "My yoke is easy." How sweet is the smile on the lips that say it! "My burden is light." The yoke, the burden that Jesus bore,— what was it? It was a sacrifice of self to others so unreserved that it became most joyful. It was a love so fervid and self-forgetting that the barrier between saint and sinner, between man and God, between this life and the life to come, was melted away in its glow. Nor in his thought was it reserved for supreme attainment, for perfect saintship, to taste the bliss of this divine world. He taught his followers to let the simplest, commonest things — the sunlight, the growing corn, the sparrow, the lily — stir their pulses with quick, responsive joy. Alas for those sad moralizers who think that happiness is a lost secret of an earlier world!

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Alas for those who think that it exists for inferior natures only,— birds and insects, perhaps, children who have not begun to think, or women who do not know how,— but is not possible for those with intellect enough to face the various aspects of the world! Such despondent ones have not penetrated so far as Jesus did into life's meaning.

It may be that in these letters I have dwelt more upon the joyful aspect of life than would be appropriate in a symmetrical presentation of the whole. It may be that I have touched too little upon the themes of endurance and suffering. But it is deliberately and of purpose that I have dwelt upon the aspect of cheer and of peace, because it seems to me that this is just the aspect which is oftenest missed by serious thinkers of our day. For thinkers, this is rightfully a somewhat sober time. Soberly, sometimes sadly, must much work be done which is most necessary for ourselves and our children. There are some who must dig a good deal in underground mines. But always the sun is shining overhead, always at night come forth the holy stars. It is the sun and the stars that are the rightful roof for mankind to live under. Even the weary miner may well come up daily to rest eye and soul in the sight

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of heaven. The highest truth comes always to mankind as a gospel, *glad tidings*. It is the forerunner, the John Baptist, who is austere and terrible. Him must we hear and obey. But after him comes the Messiah,—the very truth of God, proclaiming glad tidings to the poor, sight to the blind, healing to the broken-hearted, liberty to the captive. Is such a message a dim tradition of the past, a dream from which humanity is awaking to hard realities? Each may answer that question for himself. Let him set his feet in ways of fidelity, open his eyes and his heart to his fellow-beings and the world about him, enter its service, taste its glory, feel its awe,—and so for himself determine whether this universe belongs to the devil or to chaos or to God.

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Oh, tell me whence that joy doth spring,
  Whose diet is divine and fair,
Which wears heaven like a bridal ring,
  And tramples on doubts and despair?

Sure, holiness the magnet is,
  And love the lure which woos thee down;
Which makes the high, transcendent bliss
  Of knowing thee, so rarely known!

Henry Vaughan.

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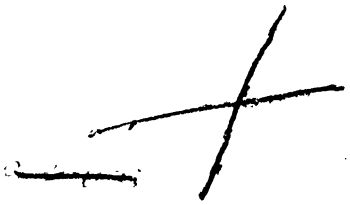

II.

THE CHARACTER OF JESUS.

THE Christian religion began in the life of Jesus. It began there as a distinct religion, but it had its roots in older and wider sources,—in the principles of duty, self-sacrifice, and aspiration, which all races and religions have in some degree shared. Its immediate parent was Judaism. The Jews were a people eminent for fidelity to moral ideas. They were inferior to the Greeks in intellectual fertility and the sense of beauty, and to the Romans in genius for practical affairs. But they were penetrated and possessed by the idea of their nation, their God, and their worship. They remained faithful to these under a tremendous experience of suffering, subjection, and dispersal. As to each of the three,—nation, God, and worship,—we trace a gradual refinement and spiritualizing of the people's thought. When the nation's present was disastrous, the thought looked forward to a future of promise. When the political framework was broken and the people scattered among all lands, the sentiment of nation-

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ality was fed by imagination going out through the earth to hold together in a spiritual unity those outwardly parted. To psalmist and prophet came glimpses of a still nobler idealization,—that the true Israel is none other than the society of all faithful and upright souls. So, too, the idea of Israel's God grew from the thought of the greatest among a crowd of national deities to that of the supreme and only ruler of the universe. The conception of his character was gradually elevated and spiritualized. In the national religion there were two distinct elements, which sometimes conflicted and sometimes harmonized: an elaborate ceremonial worship, and a worship which was "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." In the time of Jesus, the ceremonial system had long been established as an unquestioned part of the national religion. It was developed by the more zealous into a minute and burdensome rule of life. At the same time, a line of teachers such as Hillel and Gamaliel, without the fervor and independence of the ancient prophets, but under the guise of expounding the traditions of the Fathers, had developed the sweeter and humaner side of the national religion. We may say of the

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Jews as a whole, at this period, that they possessed the treasures of the highest personal morality of their time, a purer family life than any other people, an enthusiastic faith, and a noble sacred literature. Their especial limitations were a clannish nationality, which narrowed the sympathies and bred spiritual arrogance; a political subjection which denied to the higher executive faculties their natural field of exercise; an undue stress upon the external forms of worship; and the anticipation of a coming national triumph, which indeed fed the hope that nourishes life, but also tended to profitless agitation and distraction from the soul's inward kingdom in which lay their best possibilities.

Among a people inheriting this religion, Jesus was born. To this ancestral religion we can partly trace the elements of his own character and faith. But there were also in him elements of individual character and faith, in no wise generically different from those which belong to all human nature at its highest, but in him exceptional in power and vividness. We cannot explore the secret origin of this unique moral greatness. It is hidden from our sight in "the abysmal deeps of personality." The moral greatness of Jesus is unexplainable,

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just as the intellectual greatness of Shakespeare is unexplainable: in neither case need we assume any exception to the laws of nature.

The external facts of the life of Jesus, and to some extent the nature of his teaching, and his personal characteristics, are obscured for us — and beyond hope of a full recovery — by the circumstance that his biographies, written probably between fifty and a hundred years after his death, are pervaded by the misconceptions of his followers. His nearest friends never fully understood him, because he was so far above them. The original misconceptions of his disciples increased greatly when no longer checked by his presence. And there sprung from these misconceptions a growth of legends, born in an atmosphere of enthusiasm, love, and credulity, utterly unchecked by any critical or judicial habit of mind. Thus, in the earliest portraitures of Jesus, vivid and impressive though they are, we unmistakably discern that there are great deviations from the original reality; and we can only partially restore the true outline. The loss must be deeply lamented; but, rightly considered, it does not impair any of the true foundations of that faith and life of which Jesus himself was not the creator, but a teacher and a shining exam-

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ple. And, thanks to the honest intent of the narrators, and the loving veneration that in the midst of legendary growth preserved in substantial fidelity many unmistakably characteristic utterances and acts of the Master, we are able to understand with sufficient certainty the general spirit of his life and teaching, the traits and the ideas in which lay his strength.

Jesus was a man to whom the higher aspects of life disclosed themselves with extraordinary clearness and power; and, further, he was to a wonderful degree under the control of forces which most men only dimly recognize and imperfectly accept. Most men indistinctly apprehend some law or principle of duty, to which they make some intermittent effort to conform, alternating with surrender to disobedient impulses, and reaching a result in which painful struggle, self-reproach, apathy, and debasement are mingled with occasional victory and partial attainment: in Jesus, the practical acceptance of the highest known law of right-doing was so complete as to become spontaneous and joyful, and almost irresistibly to communicate itself to those who were once attracted within his influence. The generality of mankind believe in an overruling Power, whose favor they seek to win from motives of hope or fear, and the thought

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of whom exerts an interrupted and wavering influence upon their feelings and actions; but Jesus lived in the habitual profound recognition of a spiritual Presence and Power encompassing him and abiding in him, with which he was united at once by moral aspiration and by personal affection, by the conscience and the heart. He recognized this relation as in no sense a possession peculiar to himself, but as belonging of right to every human being, and to be fully entered upon through a loyal acceptance of a Will which to us has its practical expression as duty, trust, and love. In Jesus, that sentiment of disinterested regard for others which is the universal mark of any moral elevation attained by man, but which generally exists under the most limited forms and in low degree, was a passion as wide as it was deep and pure. It had in him an intensely active development: it shaped his life, and gave him half of his power. For we may say that his power had a twofold source,—the intensely vivid apprehension of spiritual realities toward which all men longingly reach, and a love for men which set him upon sharing with them his own spiritual wealth, at whatever cost to himself. And to this it is to be added that, while he had a sensitiveness to the ills of humanity such as is only possible to a nature of

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high moral purity and profound sympathy when brought into close contact with sorrowful and evil lives, he yet so apprehended a beneficent tendency and a joyful consummation for humanity, that he bore himself steadfast, serene, and radiant.

Jesus had a profound sense of the true worth and proportion of things. The kingdom of God, he said, is within you. True blessedness lies more in giving than in receiving. To be humble before what we do not know and what we have not yet attained; to be gentle; not to escape sorrow, but to endure it and find its lesson and its blessing; to hunger and thirst after righteousness; to be merciful; to be pure in heart; to shed peace into other lives; to suffer wrong rather than inflict it,—these things make up the best good of life, these bring us into true relations with the universe. To feel our poverty is the first step toward enrichment; to be gentle, merciful, peace-giving, opens other hearts to us, and blesses them and us in common; the longing for goodness impels the soul toward its desire; to the pure in heart is disclosed the highest reality.

The observances of outward worship which generally go under the name of religion were treated by Jesus with something like indiffer-

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ence. We may believe that the silence with which he habitually treated the ritualistic and theologic controversies of his day was taken by many as an indication that he was an irreligious man, or at least unreligious. The casuists and controversialists were puzzled about him, and were always testing him with their shibboleths. They were mystified, because, while both he and they professed to be concerned about religion, his mind and theirs were working in wholly different planes. The problems which he essayed were not about the conduct of temple or synagogue, nor about the relative authority of the Pentateuch and the other Scriptures, nor even about the order and method of the future life. Such topics he was wont to pass by unnoticed, or, if closely questioned upon them, to put aside. He condemned the practices and ideas of the religious community only when he found in them a direct injury to the higher interests of men. Thus, he struck fearlessly at those Sabbatic restrictions which hemmed life within cramping limits for one day in seven. He said, in a picturesque illustration, that it was right to give tribute to Cæsar; for he knew that its refusal meant a political rebellion, sure of defeat, and diversive from that spiritual culture

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to which he was urging men. But the disputes between Pharisees and Sadducees, and the problems of the casuists and theologians, he habitually ignored. The questions to which he addressed himself were of a quite different order. They were such as: how to make homely lives joyful; how to reach men in the midst of drudgery with a sense of things divine; how to master sensuality and avarice and revenge; how to keep a faith in God in view of the world's miseries; how to triumph over worry and doubt and fear.

If Jesus had been disposed to make open war on the ceremonial and dogmatic religion of his day, he would have found precedents (if he had cared for them) in some of the greatest of the prophets. The time came, within the next generation, when the issue with ceremonialism had to be sharply met, and was met with entire courage by Paul, and its settlement hastened by the resistless teaching of events. But the brief space of the ministry of Jesus was given to enforcing the simple ideals of character. These ideals as they ripened, and were modified and spread through society, were sure to work largely in the destruction and creation of institutions. Jesus foresaw it, and said prophetically that the new wine would need new

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bottles. How far he foresaw the actual tendency of events, how far he may for a time even have looked that the kingdom of righteousness should come in through a catastrophic intervention of God, with himself as its visible head, we cannot determine. It is not impossible that he was enough swayed by the thought of his time to entertain this idea. It is clear that his perception of the true end and aim of life was fuller than his comprehension of the means. The complexity of man's nature, the interdependence of soul and body, the administration of the universe by law,— these truths had not dawned over the hills of Judea, not even to the eyes of Jesus. But, if the anticipation of a visible Messianic kingdom was at times in his mind, it is not in that that there lies for us the significance of his mission. His ever-living word is that which speaks of a kingdom of God in the soul of man,— a divine and measureless destiny to which man is summoned, and to which the entrance lies in fidelity, purity, and love.

In such statements as these, we try to sum up the spirit of the life of Jesus. But, using different terms of description, we may say that his outward life was that of a travelling teacher. The details of his method are largely lost to

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us under the partly imaginative narrations of his biographers. In these, the record of his teachings is closely interwoven with a series of manifestations of superhuman control over what we now call the forces of nature. He is represented as largely occupied in the miraculous cure of the sick and especially the "possessed of devils." Notably in Mark's Gospel, and largely in the other Synoptics, his character is that of a beneficent wonder-worker. In the Fourth Gospel, this part becomes subordinate; and we have Jesus represented as the deliverer of a few very long discourses, partly polemic, partly addressed to inquirers or intimate friends, but always highly mystical and often dogmatic: centering always in his own personality; containing some passages of wonderful truth, beauty, and tenderness, but comparatively wanting in that varied and powerful enforcement of practical duties which marks the Jesus of the Synoptics. From these mixed materials, it is impossible to reconstruct a true and minute view of his habitual pursuits and occupations.

But certain great features are clearly to be discerned. He was a teacher. His teaching bore in its substance upon the most important relations of life and the highest truths attaina-

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ble by man; while in its manner it was such as to be intelligible, to a great extent, to minds of low intelligence and little training. The combination is an extraordinary one. That he was only partly successful; that even the most sympathetic of his hearers largely misunderstood him; that the interpretation of his ideas which took form and was perpetuated among the mass was in some respects widely different from his true meaning,—all this is only what we should expect. The amazing thing is that so much was rightly understood and passed into a living force.

The explanation of the fact that the lofty teaching of Jesus met with so intelligent and sympathetic a reception as it did find among his followers, brings us to a clearer recognition of the nature of his true greatness. He was uniquely great, not merely in that he saw more truth than other men, but in that he was purer, higher, sweeter than other men in his own life. He not only spoke the wisest words about goodness, he *was* good; and men and women who could hardly understand the simplest form of abstract precepts felt the loveliness of his own character, and were drawn by it. His goodness was not only great in degree, it was also of that type which men are quickest to recognize and

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admire, the type of ardent, sympathetic benevolence. Under the stories of miracles, we discern this true quality of the man. "He went about doing good." There was in him that receptive sympathy, that attentive ear, that comforting and inspiring word, that look of love and touch of compassion, which gave to those who came into his presence cheer and hope and new life. That description of him which went forth with the eloquence of loving and simple hearts, and which lived after his death, dwelt above all things on this: he helped men, he gladdened them, he fed them, he healed them, he raised them from death. And soon, among people at once imaginative and materialistic, these accounts were translated into the multiplying of loaves and miraculous healing of the sick and literal raising of the dead. That invincible materialism against which he had uttered his constant protest sprang up in full force, allied now with love and unquestioning reverence and prolific imagination, and gave birth to stories of numberless miracles. The form was incorrect; but the spirit was true, in such dress as the age required,—an expression of ardent and intense benevolence, turning its whole energy into the deliverance of mankind from all its evils.

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But in the story we also come constantly upon incidents where there is no ground to suspect perversion even in form, unmistakably genuine words and deeds, bearing the stamp of an original and rare personality, and in which we have glimpses of a character as winning as sublime. We see especially how Jesus gained through the heart those who were wholly inaccessible by the intellect. In his blessing the children, the word which he spoke, "Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," conveys a truth which only a deep spiritual experience can interpret. But the accompanying action, the tender folding of the little ones in his arms, the benignant look and gesture, won, we may be sure, the hearts of mothers to whose ears the spiritual saying had no meaning. He loved their children: that was enough to win their hearts.

Discarding all attribution of supernatural and unlimited perfection, we are yet struck, in studying the character of Jesus, by the widely different aspects of moral beauty which blend in him. Especially we are impressed by the union of clear spiritual vision and profound spiritual sentiment with the homely, practical, every-day applications of morality. It is not alone in the later chapters of the Fourth Gospel

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— infused though we may well believe them to be with the true spirit of Jesus — that we clearly discern the intensely spiritual character of his nature. That character impresses us almost more strongly where it appears, in the Synoptics, under simpler forms of speech. His habitual reference to the ruler of the universe as "My Father" and "Our Father" opens a new world to men. The sentiment of trust in a supreme power of good is expressed with exquisite simplicity and naturalness in his words about the falling sparrow and the lilies of the field; in lessons drawn from the sun and rain, blessing alike the evil and the good; in his constant use of the figure of father and child; in many a parable and many a pregnant saying; above all, in that constant mood of serenity which we see surrounding him like an atmosphere in joy and in sorrow; in the manifest sense of abiding union with an all-sufficient and all-ruling good, which impels him to intense and tireless energy, yet calms him with most tranquil assurance.

Yet with this there was nothing of mystic seclusion from the claims and obligations of ordinary human life. Goodness did not to him signify a rapturous mood. He saw moral good and evil not as abstractions, but as beauty or

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deformity in actions which to other eyes were trivial and commonplace. His eye pierced through all vague and general phraseology, as well as all the other disguises men throw about the realities of things. He will take no substitute for simple, genuine rightness of life. Especially, he condemns that most seductive delusion, the bane of religion, the substitution of sentiment and feeling for fidelity in action. The worshiper is to turn back from the very altar to redress the wrong done to his brother. And most emphatically does Jesus repel any homage to himself which does not involve a practical homage to that law which governs his own life, the law of right-doing. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" The claim of prophesying and casting out devils in his name does not for a moment delay the condemnation of them "that work iniquity." And, when a woman cries out in praise of her happiness who had borne and nourished him, she gets the grave answer, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."

Jesus both enlarged and intensified the sentiment of personal purity. In this respect, his position as a Jew gave him a vantage-ground. Perhaps the moral superiority of the Jews over

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the other peoples of the time lay not more in their monotheistic faith than in the chastity which was characteristic of them as a people. Sensuality was the deepest disease of the ancient world, and not even the introduction of the Christian religion could purify it until the classic civilization had been buried under a flood from the North. Among the Jews, a comparatively pure family life was under the effective sanction of religion. But Jesus broadened and heightened the Jewish ideal of chastity. He made the standard of virtue the same for the man and the woman, and he raised purity from a mere rule of outward life to a spiritual sentiment claiming sovereignty in the imagination and the whole nature. The Jews, according to the practice if not the theory of almost all nations, ancient and modern, allowed to man a greater license than to woman, though to some extent under the limit and pretext of a lax divorce law. Jesus condemned this by declaring that the marriage bond was indissoluble save for a breach of its fundamental article. He pierced the consciences of the men who were gloating over the shame and anticipated punishment of an adulteress with the word, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." For man and for

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woman, he invested chastity with the sacredness of a quality belonging to the soul. He treated sensuality not as the breach of a social or religious ordinance, as did the Jewish legalists; not like Socrates, with light scorn, as a mark of levity and recklessness; not even like the Jewish Book of Proverbs, as the door through which comes in a train of woes. To him, it was a thing in itself deadly and hateful, to be spurned and conquered at all cost. "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out!" "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off!" Purity was not to him a cold and negative virtue. It was a consecration and enthusiasm. It was the quality typical of holiness, the crystal atmosphere through which the soul beholds highest reality. It is the *pure* in heart who see God.

In the person of Jesus, men recognized the presence of a sacred purity; yet he often met those who had fallen the lowest from purity without word or look of rebuke, declared to them an instant and full forgiveness, and exercised a power which won them back to pure and sweet lives. There is hardly in all literature a more moving story than that of the sinful woman who wept at his feet. That one so pure should be also so forgiving has seemed to men a profound mystery. They have worked out

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explanations of it in elaborate schemes of incarnation and vicarious atonement. Yet the wonder is as simple as it is sublime. Purity meeting impurity has no need to utter rebuke. Its own presence condemns more strongly than any word or act could do. There is no stained and guilty soul, unless utterly seared and hardened, which does not in the intimate presence of a pure and holy soul feel itself condemned as if before the judgment-seat of God. And in the holy soul the supreme sentiment toward the guilty one is a yearning for its restoration. The instant it sees in the guilty a longing to be clean, its whole feeling is of glad welcome. Jesus has explained it all, to the perfect satisfaction of heart and mind, in the parable of the prodigal son. To the right-souled man, every outcast longing to return is a son, a brother. He cannot choose but forgive and welcome him. Forgiveness does not carry with it remission of penalty. It is the analogy drawn from a *legal* pardon that theologians have mostly followed, but that is a misleading analogy. The laws of nature do their inexorable work. The drunkard, the debauchee, the miser, is by no divine fiat set free from the lingering effect within himself and upon others of his past wrong-doing. Human society, too, has

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of necessity its own inflexible laws of retribution. The significance to the sinner of forgiveness, divine or human, is simply: "*You are recoverable.* There is love for you and hope for you." Jesus spoke of forgiveness with such fullness and repetition as he hardly gave to any other theme. He knew that to the mass of men it is the hardest of all virtues. Love is, in his teaching, the supreme law of life; and love finds its hardest challenge, its highest possibility, in the case of those who wrong us. So he sets as the goal for his followers, "Love them that hate you, bless them that revile you, pray for them that curse you." And most significantly, in the same connection, he adds, "Be ye *perfect*, as your Father in heaven is perfect." As if to say: "Be not discouraged, though this grace of forgiveness be a hard one to attain. It is truly the hardest of all things. It is nothing less than divine perfection that I would have you aim at." In the wonderful prayer which he gave to his disciples, so complete an embodiment of the spirit of his religion that we might call it a creed of the heart, he couples with the prayer for forgiveness the reminder that we also are to forgive. From the form of the words, a misplaced literalness has often drawn an anxious fear, as if by them we set our

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poor attainment as the measure of the divine goodness to us. That is altogether unlike the spirit of Jesus. His meaning is not, "Measure God's goodness to you by your goodness to your fellows," but "Make God's goodness to you the model of your disposition to others." Using language with Oriental freedom and inexactness, he means simply, as the whole spirit of his teaching elsewhere shows, to connect always the prayer with the duty, the aspiration Godward with the beneficence manward,— "Freely ye have received, freely give."

This, too, is to be said in regard to the teaching of Jesus about forgiveness. He recognizes fully that it can only be completely exercised when the sinner *repents*. For revenge there is nowhere a place: good-will and only good-will is to be our attitude; but that forgiveness which is restorative and welcoming is simply impossible until the wrong-doer turns, saying, "I have sinned." This also is to be observed: that the guilty soul recognizes a peculiar power, as it were of authoritative pardon, in a soul which is strong and white where itself is blemished. One who has done a wrong to another and becomes sorry for it gets the sense of restoration and recovery from nothing so much as the forgiveness of the wronged person. So a

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soul which has been smirched with the mire of sensuality, and longs for cleansing, and feels an insufferable sense of condemnation,—if it finds in pure eyes a look not of wrath, but of tender pity, of *respect* even, as for a yet unpolluted sanctuary below the foulness, gets therefrom a consciousness of relief and possible recovery, than which no human emotion is more deep, more blessed, more significant. This is the true priesthood ordained by nature and by God, —the power of the wronged to absolve the wronger, of the pure to absolve the stained. This is the sacramental revelation of a divine power working victoriously amid human ills.

The forgiving attitude of Jesus toward the outcasts of society was exchanged for one of wrath and denunciation, when he confronted the class who consider themselves the especial representatives and guardians of virtue and religion. Toward the Pharisees, he used a fierceness of invective which indicates the natural limitations of a human reformer, and a young and Jewish reformer. He met in them a stubborn opposition not only to himself personally, but to the whole spirit and idea of his religion. They were the champions of the ceremonial, the form, the letter. For them, all free inspiring play of the spirit was smothered under the

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swaddling-clothes of tradition and precedent. They were deeply infected with the deadliest of spiritual diseases,—self-satisfaction. They used the sacred names to ban the sacred realities appearing in new and higher forms. Their virtues, by no means without substance and worth, made more formidable their opposition to the new truth. Jesus assailed them with a wrathful denunciation like that of the older prophets. He called them hypocrites, devourers of widows' houses, whited sepulchers full of dead men's bones, children of hell. In these fierce attacks, we do not recognize the justice, the wisdom, or the charity which characterized Jesus at his best. We know that the Pharisees, if not the saints they called themselves, were not a body of impostors. Their zeal was genuine, though full of ignorance and prejudice. Their morality was probably above that of the community at large. It was a Pharisee, the child and the pupil of Pharisees, who most nobly developed and carried forward the work of Jesus. In the unmeasured denunciations of this class, we seem to unmistakably recognize the reformer who, in his zeal for a good cause, loses sight of all good in its opponents. We recognize, too, the Oriental temperament, less reflective and self-observant

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than the Western mind, and so more fully open to great tides of inspiration, but also more liable to identify its own impulses with a divine mandate and its own opponents with the enemies of God. Certainly, it was not by these assaults upon a class that the triumphs of Jesus were won. His real power lay in that far different temper of which he gave habitual and incomparable illustration,—the temper of the words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." So, too, when he pronounces on the towns that refuse to hear him a doom worse than that of Sodom and Gomorrah, we may appeal from Jesus in this mood to the Jesus who, when his disciples would have called down fire on the unwelcoming Samaritan village, made answer, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

Jesus had all the intense love of his nation which characterized the Jews. He probably looked at first to see the salvation of the world achieved under the leadership of the Jewish nation. We see a kindred sentiment in a great idealist of our own century, Mazzini, whose hope and faith were that Europe should be regenerated under the lead and inspiration

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of Italy,—an Italy that was to be an incarnation of freedom, patriotism, and religion. But Jesus came to see that this hope of his was not to be fulfilled. He buried it with the lamentation, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." By a different path, a slower progress, and with an ampler issue, the kingdom of God was to come in. In his own teaching he expressed, and in his own life embodied, truths whose outreach was greater than he foresaw. Through him, it was disclosed that the highest good in life lies in moral qualities, of which no monopoly belongs to a favored nation. To us, the truth of a universal and spiritual religion shines clear in such characteristic teaching of Jesus as the Sermon on the Mount. But that truth in its fullness lay for a time unseen, like the bird within the egg. It was Paul who broke the shell and freed the bird. In Paul's writings first comes out in full expression the idea of a life set free by its own ardor and purity from all dependence on ceremony and

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ritual; a society whose sole law and bond is the prevalence in all its members of such a life and spirit; a society open alike to Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, enriched by the special contribution of every class and race, with place for each individual temperament and endowment, as the human body has use for each different member;—an ideal how sublime and exhaustless, how far beyond what we have attained!

The variety, the adaptiveness, of the character of Jesus, its sufficiency for widely various exigencies of life, appear again in his bearing under the successive experiences of joy and sorrow. The feeling of the Christian world has laid especial hold upon his endurance of suffering, partly because humanity finds in time of suffering its own greatest need, and turns most eagerly to sympathy and support which will there avail it; but partly, too, because under the distresses of the Dark Ages and under a false theory of religious life there grew up a morbid exaltation of the sorrowful phases of life, which Christianity has not yet outgrown. But nothing more distinguishes the life set forth by Jesus from other moral ideals than its emphasis on the joyfulness which rightly belongs to man. This especially distinguishes it from that other

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ideal which for a time contested with it the empire over the noblest minds, and which, in a somewhat different form, is reappearing now,—the ideal of the Stoics. That conception of character sets man as heroically accepting a destiny whose origin and outcome are alike unknown to him, and as neither expecting nor desiring any personal good beyond the satisfaction attendant on a discharge of duty. Its ideal attitude is one neither of joy nor of hope, but of fidelity, fortitude, and—if it were but possible!—of calm.

But the key-note of Christ's teaching was, "*Blessed* are the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the peace-makers, they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness." His message was truly called an evangel, a gospel, "glad tidings." Out of his own experience, he said to men not only that they ought to do right,—true and sacred and perpetual though that message is,—but that in the utter devotion of one's self to right-doing lies the way out of servitude and poverty into freedom and joy and spontaneous abounding gladness. This was his message: that whoever will nobly forget himself, and accept a higher Will, and seek the good of others,—whoever will spurn the seductions of his lower nature and seek

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with his whole heart to know the truth and do the right,—he shall be *blessed;* he shall find comfort and inspiration and growing strength within himself, shall come into noble and sweet companionship with other natures, shall enter into the fellowship of the Highest, and be carried steadily on to victory over every seeming ill.

Jesus set forth love as the highest attitude of the soul, and love carries blessing with it. Yet even love, in this world, brings with it not sorrow only, but irretrievable loss and heart-break, unless it be stayed on something above this earthly life. To love is to desire good for the beloved; but, if men's lives end as to human sight they seem to end,—the worst in utter darkness, the many in a very low estate, the best and most fortunate with the sharp breaking of all tenderest ties,—then love must perpetually be called to mourn with hopeless sadness. But love was to Jesus—and to whoever will enter into his spirit it still may be—the key to a larger knowledge of the universe than the senses or the intellect reveal. By it, he felt himself united with One above man, above the visible frame of things, a Presence known to man through his deepest necessities and his highest aspirations, the sovereign and benefi-

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cent arbiter of human destiny. Under various names men express their thought of him; in various modes they seek him. To Jesus there was given a sense of sacred familiarity with him. Not to Jesus alone was it given. The psalmists and prophets had experienced that high communion. The noblest souls under every religion have been at one with each other in recognizing above themselves and within themselves the presence of the Highest and Best. Nay, we may say that there is, perhaps, scarcely a human soul but has, at least in some glimmering and doubtful way, been conscious of a greater than itself, of that true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. But in Jesus that light shone radiant and steady. For him, that communion was almost unbroken. And he gave to it a clearer and higher interpretation than before it had received, telling men that they are most closely akin to God through what is highest in themselves,— through goodness and love. Yet more: to him it was given to communicate by sympathy that which can but dimly be expressed in language; to awaken in his followers a sense of communion with the invisible; to give a mighty impulse to that sense of spiritual fellowship with God which, even

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though mixed and debased by lower elements, was to be as a new life in the world, and perpetuate itself from age to age.

To Jesus there was in all beauty, all high impulse, all self-surrendering and self-forgetting love, the intimation of a divine presence. He was conscious of an intimate relation between himself and the Highest, which he could only express by such terms of kinship as "son" and "father." To him, these words expressed no exclusive relationship of his own: he applied them freely to those who had but a dimly dawning consciousness of their own high estate, bidding them say "Our Father." More: by precepts so simple that the dullest might understand, he taught them how to enter into the fullness and realization of their sonship. "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, that ye may be the children of your Father." "Be ye perfect, as he is perfect." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The very preciousness to mankind of Jesus' intimate sense of divine sonship lay in this: that it was *not* something peculiar to himself; that he possessed it by right of his humanity, a humanity essentially the same as ours; that it belongs by right to whoever will cultivate in himself that disposition which in

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Jesus was carried to such a height, the spirit of fidelity and service and love.

Jesus gave no definition of God. None knew better than he that the divine in its fullness transcends our comprehension, and eludes our terms of speech. But he showed the way to truly apprehend him, by accepting the highest intimations of our own moral nature as his best revelation. He offered no logical proof of God's existence; but he showed how, by opening the heart to him, by growing in those characteristics in which are our likeness and union to him, we may come into a practical and living consciousness of him which is above the necessity of intellectual demonstration.

Jesus, too, quickened in men the sense that human destiny is ensphered in a divine order. That profound mystery out of which our life issues and to which it returns is not an abyss of nothingness. Death is not the end. Beyond it lies a future,— incomprehensible, august, transcending thought. Of what lies beyond that veil, our truest foreshinings are given by the experiences of holiness and love. To the rightly poised soul, that futurity is more than terrorless: it is full of beckoning peace. To him who rightly looks toward it,

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foreign alike are shrinking and haste. The present, also, is divine. Here as there, God encompasses the soul.

In this sense of the divine fatherhood and man's divine destiny is the ground of that deep peace which in disappointment stays itself on the assurance of ultimate triumph, and which rises serenely above all bitter experience and seeming frustration. In this sense, too, is the ground of free, spontaneous joy in all the brighter aspects of nature and human life. Perhaps no element in the life of Jesus has been more lost sight of than this. His followers have dwelt almost exclusively on the deeply serious phases of existence. They have found good reason for doing so, in that they have had as the corner-stones of their theology the ideas of a world lost in ruin and a dearly bought salvation for a portion of its inhabitants. Such ideas will justly allow only an intensely and continuously serious view of life; but such ideas are at the farthest remove from the spirit of Jesus. To him, the world was not the seat of a fallen and rebellious race: it was his Father's house and the home of his Father's children. Even in the scanty and fragmentary records of his sayings, we catch a sympathy with the joy of nature. We seem to feel at times the breeze

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over the sunlit lake of Galilee; there breathes on us the odor of the wild flowers through which, with slow steps and loving glance, he moves; there falls on the spirit the freshness of morning in the mountain; and the mountain sunrise opens upon us its glories. We see the disciples eager always for wonders, pushing hotly for speedy conquests, while the master, possessed by a more rapt and lofty energy than theirs, yet finds leisure to note with kindliest eye the drudging occupations of the household and the children playing in the market place. He makes homely friendships, he is a welcome guest at all tables.

Yet, while that ideal of character of which Jesus is our highest type includes not only the deepest peace but light-hearted joy, it takes also upon itself a heavy burden. For it is intensely sympathetic. True sympathy indeed takes upon itself the joy as well as the sorrow of others: its spirit is to "rejoice with them that do rejoice," as well as "weep with them that weep." But it is the sorrowful whose need especially draws to them those who walk in the way trodden by Jesus. Love will indeed largely free us from petty and ignoble suffering, from trouble which is debasing because it is self-centred; but true love takes upon itself the bur-

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dens of the beloved. (And in this aspect has the life of Jesus made its most powerful appeal to human hearts, and wrought in them its noblest work: that, freely and for love's sake, he shared and lightened the deepest sorrows of man.) Fancy and speculation have told the story in a version which reason cannot accept. They have represented Jesus as very God descending into the world to literally bear in his own person the sorrows of the whole race. That conception expresses in an allegory or picture — which has been devoutly received as literal fact — a truth of history and also a universal, spiritual truth. Jesus, not as God, but as man, as the human son of God, did by his own sympathy enter into and suffer under the sorrows of men. (By that sympathy and by truly giving his life to serve and save them, he won their hearts and inspired in them a new life. Not otherwise is every man and woman called, each according to his own capacity and opportunity, to bear by sympathy the burdens of others, to serve and to save them.)

Jesus was called by his unique greatness to do for many what most men are summoned to do for but few. He felt that in him there was beginning a new and mighty influence upon the world at large. His joys and sorrows had the

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amplitude which belong to purposes and emotions extending out toward the whole race. He suffered not only in the griefs and failures of individuals: he was also most deeply sensitive to those aspects of collective human nature which press upon all men who serve their race in a large sphere. In the records which we have of him, we do not perceive that he was ever daunted by the lower forms of vice, though then as now it was these to which men are in the largest numbers and most conspicuously enslaved. He had a wonderful power of arousing the profligate and abandoned to a better life, winning them by a sympathetic personal approach as rare in their experience as it was gracious. It seems not unreasonable to suppose that he may have underestimated the slowness with which mankind's great moral conquests are won. He felt within himself a divine impulse of amazing power; he lived in the assurance of an infinite beneficence ruling human affairs; he had doubtless but small knowledge of that great world-history now opening to us, and which tells on every page how slowly comes in the kingdom of God.

It is very noticeable that such words of temporary discouragement as his biographers have preserved sprang not from contact with the

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openly vicious, but from experiences with his own followers. With beautiful humility and sincerity, his disciples have related his repeated outbursts of sorrow and disappointment at their own dullness and hardness of heart. "O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" In such exclamations is the deepest pathos. They show, in the noblest of moral reformers, that sense of the moral sluggishness of mankind which must at times come with overwhelming sadness upon all who seek the advancement of the race. Open vice, dense ignorance, are recognized from the first as what must be faced and overcome. But that the chosen few, "the twelve," those with whom the future of the great work rests, should be earthly, stupid, selfish, that their highest conceptions of religion should persistently revert to materialistic, unvital forms,—what sorrow, what discouragement in this, what foreboding of a future largely made up of failures and mistakes worse than failures! Some such foreboding, we may be sure, fell at times upon Jesus, and drew from him those burdened words. In those words the sorrowful heart relieved itself, and he went on his way. Unto the end, he loved and labored with his own; and, if by their mistakes they and

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his followers ever since have justified his foreboding, not less has the vast blessing that flowed through them to mankind justified his patience and his faith. Well of him might it be said, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied."

Jesus avoided the mistake which is characteristic of men with a high capacity for spiritual emotion. He did not exact an experience like his own from men of different endowment. It is noticeable that his commendation is given never to rapturous feeling, always to practical goodness or to insight into moral truth. It is acts of charity and justice that win his approval,— the widow giving freely out of her poverty, the publican ready to make restitution for his extortions. It is not they whose faith is ecstatic, but they who "do the will of my Father," whom he calls "my brother and my sister and my mother." He uses the sublime imagery of a divine judgment-day to set forth the truth that it is such deeds as feeding the hungry, comforting the sick, visiting the imprisoned, that make us the true children of the Highest. Here, as everywhere, he sets in terrible contrast the quality of the opposite disposition. There need not be active wrong-doing to bring us into the accursed state. It is

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enough for that that we be apathetic and inactive toward the world's miseries. So, always, the essential, vital requirement is of the things which the honest heart and conscience instinctively own as good. The only faith which is indispensable is *fidelity*. The open vision, the conscious sense of God,—these are not duties, but blessings. Happy is he to whom they come, and great his responsibility!

In that type of character which Jesus himself exemplified, a character illumined and energized by an intense sense of unseen realities, the critical test comes in emergencies when the clearness and serenity of spiritual vision fail. At such times falls the severest stress, the sternest test of character. They who habitually live by duty rather than inspiration, by fidelity more than by enthusiasm, at least escape the shock and strain which come with the intermission of a high spiritual feeling upon which the soul has habitually depended. The soul wont to walk in the noonday,—how will it bear itself at midnight? No other hour in human history has entered so deeply into the hearts of men as that passed by Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. That light in whose radiance he had lived went out for a time in darkness. There fell upon him the shadow of

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a sorrow into which doubtless entered a sympathetic sense of all human woe. Perhaps then first came upon him the realization that the day of God, which he had thought just ready to break upon earth, was to come in slowly through long generations, through which men were still to sin and suffer. A sorrow beyond all personal grief fell upon that great soul. The courage that no outward enemy could shake was shaken. That sense of a divine love which had hitherto upborne him failed now to lift him above the black waters of anguish. Joy was gone, hope was eclipsed; yet he held himself true to something deeper than hope or joy. "Not my will, but thine, be done!" With that word, he overcame.

Upon the cross, which followed close upon Gethsemane, the figure of Jesus passes from our sight. There he disappeared from those to whom he was not, as to us, the supreme personage of history, but their daily friend, their master, he on whom they had centred every joy and every hope. He died upon the cross.

What is the meaning of that new birth in them of hope and joy and courage, in which they went forth to conquer the world? What is the true sequel of that existence that was made up of heroism and love and moral vic-

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tory? Those men, who had only half-understood their master, who were far below him in all natural endowment and all attainment, had caught his spirit. Through love there had passed into their souls a capacity for higher truth than their minds could interpret. And he in whom there was in fullness that moral life which is the most vital and indestructible thing in the universe, he whose soul was a spark of immortal life, passing into the unseen realms, pierced the dividing veil with a sense of his living personality, which reached and filled those loving hearts. It broke upon them like a revelation,—their master was not dead! He had but passed into a higher life. His sympathy was with them. His victory was the pledge of theirs. His friendship was to be to them more than it had ever been. Through him, they could feel that close relation with the unseen world which he had declared to them, but which had been to them a half-unreal thing until he had passed into that world. In that consciousness was a new inspiration, a baptism of fire. They were not transformed out of their old selves. Their minds could not shake off the old materializing tendency. Their imagination speedily filled with wonders and prodigies the story of their Master's life. Their sense of his risen life

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they expressed, as was natural to simple-minded Jews, under the figure of bodily appearances. Intense and unspeakable disclosures to the soul were interpreted in the language of revelation to bodily sense. But, below all imperfections of philosophy and confusions of the spiritual with the material, they laid hold on sure and sublime truth. Jesus had indeed risen. He lived and still lives. In him were life and immortality brought to light. They who enter into his spirit, and live his life of fidelity and love, shall, like him, enter into fellowship with God, the pledge and foretaste of a higher life beyond.

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AWAY, haunt thou not me,
Thou vain Philosophy!
Little hast thou bestead,
Save to perplex the head,
And leave the spirit dead.
Unto thy broken cisterns wherefore go,
While from the secret treasure-depths below,
Fed by the skiey shower,
And clouds that sink and rest on hill-tops high,
Wisdom, at once, and Power,
Are welling, bubbling forth, unseen, incessantly?
Why labor at the dull mechanic oar,
When the fresh breeze is blowing,
And the strong current flowing,
Right onward to the Eternal Shore?

A. H. CLOUGH.

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III.

UP AND ENTER.

You tell me, my friend, that the life of Jesus, as it has thus been described, is full of beauty and attractiveness to you. As the picture of a life purely human, but wholly inspired and governed by duty, love, and trust, you say it satisfies your reason and your moral feeling. You would gladly make it your own ideal, and try to live in that same spirit. But you find yourself in the midst of perplexities and difficulties. I see that your questionings relate partly to Jesus himself and partly to the way of thinking and feeling about God which we ascribe to him. As to Jesus himself, you cannot absolutely make up your mind whether he was only a man or something more than man; whether or not he was miraculously born, and did the miracles related of him, and rose from the grave in visible form; whether or not you should take the Gospels as literally true, and the words attributed to Jesus as divinely spoken. Then, again, looking in another direction, when you try to exercise toward God that feeling as toward a

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father, which Jesus taught his disciples to feel, a host of difficulties confronts you. How can you be sure that God is our Father? How, in that strange mixture of good and evil which you feel in yourself and see in the world, can you have any assurance that love rules and guides all? Or how can you be certain but that death ends all, and the hope of immortality is only the child of our wishes, an imagination to which there is no corresponding reality? Such doubts, you tell me, press upon you so closely that you feel constantly hindered from any progress and almost from any beginning in a life like that of Jesus.

It is at this point that I seek to meet you,—that your chief desire is not to have these questions answered for their own sake merely, but to be helped to *live*. You want light, not simply for the delight of the eye, but that you may walk by it. And that is just what you can have. Understand at once, I do not assume to offer you any answers to the above questions that will satisfy your mind and lay the doubts to final rest. On some of the questions, you may by and by see your own way clear; on others, you will probably continue to speculate at times as long as you live. But, in the mean time, you may at once, if you will, enter upon

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the reality of a life after that highest pattern. Leave others to discuss the theory, do you take the thing.

Understand first what I mean by getting the reality even while you have not a full understanding of it. It is like this: Here is a man in some despotic country, under bad laws, wretchedly paid for his labor, his children growing up poor and ignorant, his sons liable to be conscripted into the army. He hears something about America. Some one tells him about its discovery by the adventurous voyager, Columbus. He hears accounts of the freedom and prosperity of its people. The whole matter is full of things that he cannot understand; whether the voyage of Columbus be a history or a fable he is quite unfit to judge; the very idea of a "self-governing" people is a mystery to him. If he stays at home till these things become clear and certain to him, he will stay there till he dies. But he may save his money till he can pay his passage to America, and actually go there with his family. Getting there, he can earn the higher wages, his children can go to the free schools, his sons undergo no military service, he finds himself soon made a voter and picking up some knowledge of public affairs, he and his are in full realiza-

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tion of the privileges of American citizenship. He does not know much about Columbus, he could give only bungling answers to questions about the history of the country and the philosophy of its institutions, but *he is an American.*

Now, we may say that Jesus was the Columbus who made known to men the spiritual new world. That is, he showed men a way of living far nobler, more joyful, more successful than they had been familiar with before. He introduced among men that way of living. The name he gave it was *the kingdom of God.* Whenever a man comes under the inspiration of fidelity and love and trust, there the kingdom of God is planted in a soul. As the inspiration spreads from one to another, and men ally and associate themselves under its influence, there the kingdom of God is set up in society. Its progress is slow, no infallible guidance is given to it, the mistakes and shortcomings of its members delay it; but it exists, it grows from age to age, its present tokens are just as visible to seeing eyes as are the tokens of an American life and society. Sometimes, the bodies organized under the name of the Christian Church claim to be identical with the kingdom of God. But that is as misleading as if the Republican

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party or the Freemasons should claim to be the American people. The members of the kingdom of God are those whom the Episcopal Prayer-Book speaks of as "the blessed company of all faithful people." They are the men and women everywhere, whether known or unknown to each other, who are living pure, brave, helpful lives. We become members of the kingdom of God, so far as we come under the influence of what is sometimes called "the spirit of God," sometimes by other names,— the spirit and disposition whereby we become faithful, serviceable, humble, reverent, hopeful, open-eyed, and open-hearted.

See, then, how simple a thing it is to enter the kingdom of God! As simple as for a foreigner to come to America. There is no more need to clear up all your doubts about Jesus than for him to make sure about the story of Columbus. The story of Columbus is one of the finest in history: the life of Jesus is the most heroic and inspiring treasured in human memory; but, if either record becomes to any man a puzzle and a stumbling-block, he had better turn away and address himself to his own journey to the new country, to the nobler life. You need no more wait to understand the mysteries of God's existence and adminis-

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tration than the immigrant need wait to understand the growth of American institutions and the philosophy on which they are based. Up, and take your birthright!

Think not, either, that you can possess that birthright in its fullness in a single hour or day or year. Two great truths as to the kingdom of God stand side by side. Its beginning is wonderfully simple and near at hand: its fulfilment is infinitely complex and long. The act of duty nearest to you now; the helpful deed to your neighbor, neglected perhaps while you thought of the problems of the universe; the cheerful face, the kindly word, the repressed impatience, that shall make your presence in the household a presence of good,—so near as this, so simple, is one step toward the kingdom. But to have that kingdom wholly regnant within you; to make fidelity so habitual that it becomes spontaneous; to have service to another, instead of self-pleasing, grow to be the first impulse; to carry noble feeling and sympathy and lofty cheer like a constant atmosphere about you,—that is indeed a mighty matter, and long must it be in accomplishing! Why grudge to it your whole lifetime? If a young man entering business were given assurance that with twenty years' labor he should become a mill-

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ionnaire, he would count the prize well worth the cost. What, then, though it take many years, and struggles unmeasured, and the impress of all various experience of joy and sorrow, to thoroughly imbue your character with the divine principle, to bring you to a full consciousness of your sonship toward God, and to make you in every act a living epistle of the living gospel? Nay, what though at the end of long and faithful life you shall feel yourself but on the threshold, and find among the most sacred intimations of the hereafter the soul's hunger and thirst for a higher goodness than it has reached?

The noblest passages of the Bible, and especially the most characteristic sayings of Jesus, bear witness, along with all our best experience and observation, to these two things, — how plain and near to every honest seeker is the beginning of the right path, and how gradual is the progress upon it to the celestial heights. "This commandment is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." So we may

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say: The secret lies not in the mysteries of theology, that you need ask, "Who shall settle for us the question of Christ's divinity, and explain to us the divine existence, that we may know the true way and walk in it?" The way is right before your feet: the nearest act of duty or of service is the first step in it.

We are apt to associate Jesus with some idea of complete and immediate triumph of good over evil. But again and again, in those parables by which he loved to illustrate his great truth of the kingdom of God, did he compare it to the processes of the natural world in its slow and steady working. It is like yeast, that sinks into the mass of flour and silently and by degrees transforms it. It is like the harvest, which by change that from day to day the eye can hardly note passes from grains hid in the earth to wheat fields waving their white welcome to the reaper. It is like a tiny seed which seems to perish unseen, but from which grows a stately tree laden with fruit and joyful with song of sheltered birds.

I pause here, having pointed out to you these two facts about that higher life on which you seek to enter,— these two laws, if you please to call them so, of the kingdom of God. Your entrance on that life,— I mean your *conscious*

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entrance, for whatever fidelity and aspiration and unselfish love you have ever had has been in so far a participation in the higher life,—your conscious, active entrance into the kingdom of God does not depend on getting your puzzling questions answered, but on a faithful obedience to that which is already most sure and plain to you. Yet, at the same time, you need to arm yourself with tireless patience, because the work you are undertaking is so great; and you are to be undismayed, though fullness and constancy of peace be not soon achieved. Let me not seem to say that there do not arise real problems at some points of the path, which we must answer as best we can. All real undertakings have puzzles connected with them. A man cannot pull a row-boat across the Connecticut without meeting some small problems of navigation. He cannot build a house or earn his living or bring up his children without having to settle a hundred and a thousand doubtful questions as best he can. How then shall he manage the tremendous business of living the noblest possible life, without facing many a knotty problem? The studying out of the answers makes part of the healthy discipline of it all. But I would have you look less at the remote and vast questions of philosophy, and more at the

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near and practical questions. I would bring you face to face with the vital matter, the business of *right living*,— so grand, so solemn, so infinite, yet so full of welcome and encouragement to whoever manfully begins it.

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WHATEVER thou canst hear or see
Of grand or sweet is meant for thee;
And every joy for which thy heart
Can gladden, shall be thine in part;
And every sorrow thou canst share,
For thee its blessed fruit shall bear.
Thou call'st "thine own" a narrow spot,
And frettest; but hast thou forgot
That far and far this earth is spread,
The one sky stretching overhead?
One earth, one sky, one common air,
One household, 'neath one Father's care.
Thou toil'st to build thy selfish walls;
But, when the evening shadow falls,
Thy Father's voice thou'lt gladly hear,
"Come home, my child, for night is near!"
Then, looking backward o'er thy day,
Thy walls will show as children's play,—
As children's play, who set apart
Their garden-beds with careful art,
What time their father claims alone
The whole wide garden for his own!

HARRIET W. HALL.

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IV.

THE UNFAILING RESOURCE.

I WRITE these letters to you, my friend, as to a person who wants to live in the best and highest way. I have tried to show you that the beginning of such a life is very simple. It lies in being earnestly faithful to what you already know beyond any doubt to be right. But, if you are making that attempt in real earnest, you will run against difficulties almost from the start. I do not mean puzzles of the intellect, questions about things too great for us to understand, but practical difficulties, such as a boy meets when he is learning to skate and continually falls down, or such as an apprentice to a trade meets when through unskilfulness he mars his job and spoils his materials. I mean such difficulties as attend the mastering of any noble craft or art, and in most abundance that noblest of them all, the art of right living. So that indeed, if you do not find plenty of hindrances, it is a sure sign, not that you have mastered your art, but that you have not even begun to practise it. But first let us try to get a fuller idea of the mark we are aiming at.

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You are seeking for yourself the best thing in the world. Stop here a moment, and think of the others who desire that best thing as earnestly as you do. Think of that wide circle, all over the earth, of men and women who long for a nobler and more satisfying life than they have reached. Think that every person you know has keen feelings, eager desires, hungering and thirsting after good; that their lives are just as real and their wants just as imperative to them as yours are to you. If they are not consciously seeking the highest things, so much the more is their real need. Take some sense of this great company in which you are only one; and then lay it to heart that the only object worthy to be sought with your whole strength is the good of all these lives, and not just your own. To come back to the word of Jesus, you are to seek not your own salvation, but "the kingdom of God." A kingdom is a society. About any merely personal salvation Jesus has very little to say except this, "He that saveth his life shall lose it!" He that seeks even the highest good for himself alone shall be disappointed.

This idea of living not in isolation, but in community, is the very corner-stone of the kingdom of God. The natural framework of human

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society stands like a body ready prepared for this idea to enter into and vivify. For, in the natural social order of things, we are all set in mutual helpfulness and dependence,—parent and child, farmer and mechanic and merchant, buyer and seller, producer and manufacturer and consumer, each meeting the other's want. To some extent, this goes on ignobly and as of mere necessity, men contributing something to other men because only by the exchange can they gain their own bread. But, just so far as the idea of mutual service is accepted intelligently and gladly, so far things come upon their right footing, and society is harmonized and ennobled. So far is made good Paul's grand figure, in which he likens men with their various gifts to eye and ear and hand and foot, all working in a common service, all making up the body whose inhabitant is the spirit of God. So far as this is brought about among men is made good the saying, "The true church of God is organized human society."

Until you have thought of your own profession or calling in this light, as a service to society, you have not taken hold of it by the right handle. You degrade your daily work if you think of it only as that which earns your living. It is something more. Whether it be

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farming or carpentering, doctoring or dentistry, selling dry goods or carrying a hod of mortar, it is adding something to the comfort and happiness of other people, or else it is no fit work for an honest man. Learn to think of it in this larger way. Let your imagination play upon the beneficent results of your work: follow out in your thoughts what effect it has upon your employer or your customer. This is not idle sentiment. It is the only way to give your work the best quality. You cannot be so much as honest, unless you have the habit of looking at the other man's end of the bargain as well as your own.

It is possible indeed for a man from mere prudent selfishness to do work which is good or even great. But such a man wholly misses that reaction from his work upon himself which ought to make *him* good and great. His service to society has no more moral quality than the blowing of the wind or falling of the rain. He is like a senseless tool, which indeed increases the power of the hand that wields it, but shares nothing of the life which inspires and guides that hand. In your work for society be not a hammer or a trowel, be a living hand!

This subject of service is as broad as human

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life. Take another aspect of it: A little thought will show you how vastly your own happiness depends on the way other people bear themselves toward you. The looks and tones at your breakfast-table, the conduct of your fellow-workers or employers, the faithful or unreliable men you deal with, what people say to you on the street, the way your cook and housemaid do their work, the letters you get, the friends or foes you meet,— these things make up very much of the pleasure or misery of your day. Turn the idea around, and remember that just so much are you adding to the pleasure or the misery of other people's days. And this is the half of the matter which you can control. Whether any particular day shall bring to you more of happiness or of suffering is largely beyond your power to determine. Whether each day of your life shall *give* happiness or suffering rests with yourself.

Take one more application. It is expressed in these words,— as full and fruitful, I think, as ever were spoken,— "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." It is the habit of looking on your neighbor's life with some such interest as you do on your own. That is a key that as

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long as you live will unlock larger worlds to you continually. We are apt to live among other people in a blind, unobservant way, like a man who goes on painfully scraping a living out of a stony farm, without knowing there is a gold mine under it. We find life dull and uninteresting, when every man and woman and child about us is a story by God's own hand, a drama that is always acting. The genius of Shakespeare himself is largely the power to read the stories in lives that to unobservant eyes look humdrum. There is no art more capable of cultivation. But it needs a moral impulse. If we are seeking only our own amusement, we shall not find our neighbor amusing. If we are on the lookout for a chance to help him, we shall soon begin to find out his wants; and then the whole range of his capacities, feelings, experiences, will open itself to our sight. Before curiosity, men shut and lock their doors: to true sympathy, the doors fly open. And while mere intellectual insight discerns indifferently the good and evil in human nature, to sympathy there especially opens itself the element of good,—which is best worth knowing and which is after all the deepest fact. Perhaps we may say it is this which best distinguishes the insight of Jesus from

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the insight of Shakespeare. It was the peculiarity of Jesus to find good in men and women where others had found only evil. He was not deceived. No eye pierced the hypocrite's disguise like his. But, in the outcasts of whom society had despaired, he saw under all the evil a germ of redemptive good. And, when he spoke to that hidden good in fallen man or woman the word of recognition, then was seen the noblest miracle. In miser or in harlot, the buried generosity and purity stood up as if from the dead, to live and reign. The way of Jesus is the way for us,— through interest in men to come to know them; to carry to them a sympathy which shall draw out the best that is in them; and, by seeing and welcoming that good, to help them to make it sovereign in their lives.

My friend, as you try to live in the highest way, I think there is scarcely a single difficulty in which you will not find supreme help from the use of a helpful hand and a sympathetic eye. Most of our moral troubles run back to one common root,— isolation. It is one form of isolation from which you are suffering when you tell me that as yet God is very unreal and distant to you, so that at times you doubt whether there is any such being. Believe me,

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the only way to a knowledge of him lies through getting first into service and sympathy and communion with our fellow-men. The atmosphere which envelops the lonely thinker has not the quality which transmits the rays of the divine sun. That light shines only through air become substantial by human service, made warm and palpitating by human love. However perplexed you may at any hour become about some question of truth, one refuge and resource is always at hand: you can do something for some one besides yourself. When your own burden is heaviest, you can always lighten a little some other burden. At the times when you cannot see God, there is still open to you this sacred possibility, to *show* God; for it is the love and kindness of human hearts through which the divine reality comes home to men, whether they name it or not. Let this thought, then, stay with you: there may be times when you cannot find help, but there is no time when you cannot give help.

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A SENSE sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

WORDSWORTH.

ERE on my bed my limbs I lay,
It hath not been my use to pray
With moving lips or bended knees;
But silently, by slow degrees,
My spirit I to love compose,
In humble trust my eyelids close,
With reverential resignation,
No wish conceived, no thought expressed
Only a sense of supplication,
A sense o'er all my soul imprest
That I am weak, yet not unblest,
Since in me, round me, everywhere,
Eternal Strength and Wisdom are.

COLERIDGE.

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V.

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

I HAVE written to you, my friend, of moral fidelity and sympathetic service to others, as two things which go far to make up that noblest way of living which Jesus called the kingdom of God. But now you ask, further, how you are to come into any real sense of God himself. In your struggle to do right, you feel the need of more than human help. As you look with sympathy upon other lives, you long for some assurance as to their happy outcome, which is impossible unless you can rest upon some beneficent power above man. Whatever line of noble effort or feeling you earnestly follow brings you soon to this,—the longing for that help, that assurance, that consolation which men have found in God and which without him is impossible. I want to help you to reach such a faith. But I think almost the first thing toward reaching it is for you to lay aside the expectation which is generally cherished,—the expectation of having God made comprehensible to your thought and distinct to your imagi-

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nation. I think when most people use the word "God," they mean by it some vast personage with thoughts and emotions and purposes like those of a perfectly good man, of infinite power and wisdom. Indeed, to very many religious people, God is wholly represented by the human figure of Christ. To a great extent, Christ has been accepted as the God of the Christian world. And that idea is still held by many with an inexpressible intensity of feeling. They cling to it because it gives them an idea of God which the imagination can distinctly apprehend and toward which can go out an emotion as definite and vivid as goes out toward a human friend. I believe that to think of Christ as really and truly God come down into the world gives to the *reason* endless and hopeless trouble. At every point of the story of his life,— a story as simple as it is beautiful, if we take it as a story of a human life,— the thought of him as God starts questions which bring us straight to self-contradiction. Yet, spite of this immeasurable difficulty to the reason, men go on worshiping Christ as God, because it gives them what they desire,— a God whom the imagination can distinctly picture. To those who are satisfied with this, I have not a word of dissuasion or

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dissent to utter. Under that conception there comes home to very many a deep and vital sense of God. But I am writing for such as must have a different thought of God, if they are to think of God at all. And to such I say, we must lay aside all expectation of apprehending God under any such distinct image as that of a man. We must not expect to understand him as well as we understand a man. The maker and ruler of the universe; the inner force that shapes and guides the whole; the fountain of mystery whence our own mysterious lives are born and whither they return; the source of all power, beauty, life; the one supreme reality, in whom all contradictions are reconciled, all destinies comprehended,—before Him thought is humbled and imagination veils its face.

This profound sense that we can neither comprehend God nor distinctly imagine him must, I think, go along with our truest thought about him and closest approach to him. Does it seem to you to *forbid* any approach to him? No! The things in life which are most real and precious to you are those which you can neither make a picture of nor explain in your thoughts. Your nearest and dearest human friend, for example,—you say that you see

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him, but it is only an outside casing that you see. What you really feel and love in your friend is something very different from that, — something your eyes cannot see nor your thought explain. So it is with that greatest of all realities which we name God.

The first thing, I have said, toward getting a real and trustworthy sense of God, is to lay aside that idea which constantly obtrudes itself, — of some one whom we can imagine and think about under the image of an all-good and all-wise man. But you ask, Did not Jesus speak of God as a *Father?* Yes, and in speaking so he expressed a feeling which we hope to reach for ourselves. But understand that this, like all other human words applied to God, is used by way of figure or illustration. Just so, God is called a rock, a tower, a fountain, an eagle, fire, light, a mother, a husband. All these words denote in a vivid way some quality which the pure and devout soul apprehends in the being it worships. All strong feeling uses this kind of figurative language. But we cannot take these figures and reason about them as if they were literally true. And, because the soul in its clearest and highest moments feels in God what it can best express by calling him "Father," it does not follow that we can

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reason about his actions by exact analogy with the actions of a human father. The overlooking of this is one of the mistakes which bring people into perplexity and trouble. They ask, If God is a Father, why does he not take away from me this trouble, why does he not reclaim this friend who is going wrong, as a human father would do? And because this expectation is not met, there comes often a reaction of disbelief and despair. Men say in their hearts, No father would let such things happen as do happen, and so we do not believe we have any Father-God. We cannot cut at the root of this disbelief, unless we come to understand that God and his ways are quite beyond any such full understanding as men have claimed to have.

So much for false expectations which must be set aside. The beginning of the whole matter is to have that quality which Jesus declared first of all to be blessed,—the being "poor in spirit"; that is, having a very humble idea of ourselves and our own knowledge. Or we may take as a key to help unlock the difficulty that other word of his: "Except ye become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of God." A child has no conceit that it understands the universe. It lays hold by its senses and affec-

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tions of the things that are right about it, and by these it grows toward something else. It gropes for its mother's bosom. It learns to know her face. It learns the other faces that come around it. It warms itself in love before it knows the word. It learns to reach and to handle. Day after day, it finds its little world enlarging. By getting sure hold on the things about it, it gets access continually to larger and better things.

In some such way, we are to fit ourselves to the world by which we are encompassed, and to learn its meanings one by one. Some of its earlier meanings are very effectually taught by necessity. Man must win his bread from the earth by his labor,—that is the primary lesson which nature teaches with hearty good-will. Yet man blunders over it, tries to shirk the necessity, and in particular makes great trial of the resource of taking somebody else's food away from him. But still the lesson stands there till he slowly gets it learned. Side by side with it goes on a higher lesson,—that no man is to live for himself alone, but also for others. The family is the chief school in which that lesson is begun and carried on, and of all our schools of all sorts the family remains the first and the best. So one great lesson after

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another gets itself learned. And, not to speak with any pretence of fullness or exactness about this mighty education of the race, sooner or later and in various ways we come upon this fact: that all about us, in myriad forms and infinite extent, are such things as we name beauty, order, goodness, character, love, life. These are what we may call *the spiritual realities.* They are realities which speak to our nobler nature. And the lesson which corresponds to this fact — the highest lesson that is set us, the way into all that is worth living for — is that we keep our whole natures open to these realities, to perceive them and to respond to them.

It is sometimes said that every soul makes for itself the world it lives in. There is a half-truth in the saying; but I would rather say, every soul *finds* for itself the world it lives in. A group of men look together at a landscape. One is a farmer, and his eye tells him what capacity the land offers for wheat-growing or sheep-raising or dairy-farming. Another is a mineralogist, and he detects the signs of coal or iron underground. A third is an artist, and his sight takes in the hues and forms, the lights and shadows, that make up the picture. Just so, we all have our own way of looking at life.

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The value of what we find in it depends on what we have learned to see, what we have a taste and capacity for. The woman who cares for nothing so much as dress finds the world no better than a milliner's shop. The man who values nothing but money finds the world nothing but a big mint. They who have insight and mastery in the realm of material power — for building ships or making railroads or raising corn — find the earth a field for such activity. But he who has a sense of beauty finds the world beautiful beyond expression. He in whom conscience is developed finds himself standing in a moral universe more real and august than all that the senses apprehend. The heart that loves feels the vibrating thrill of nerves that knit its life to another life. As love grows larger and tenderer, we feel ourselves ensphered with other souls whose circles widen toward infinity. So, if one sets himself to earnest, obedient study of those processes which we name nature, he finds that the more he understands and obeys them the more friendly they become to him. The men and women, though they be poor, ignorant, blundering, who day by day are quietly setting aside their own pleasure for the sake of some other person, taste a sweetness and get in themselves a growth

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which makes the world a sacred place for them. The man that is rightly reverent finds ever more and more to revere. The trustful heart learns to yield itself to the embrace of the universe, as a babe lies in its mother's arms. The aspiring soul attains one height to find always a loftier height offering its promise beyond. The one who has entered most deeply into life fears what we call death the least.

Your nature, my friend, is a house that has many windows. Accustom yourself to look out of the windows that give toward the hills and the sea and the heavens. There is the window of Beauty. Have you begun to see the splendor that lies about your daily path? I write upon a day "in the dead of winter," as we say, yet all about me lies a world of living and glowing beauty. Every tree has its own special loveliness. Spruce and fir, elm and apple, each carries its feathery load with some peculiar grace. Have you watched the sky on these last evenings, as the sun set amid such warm and tender and various hues as summer could scarcely rival, the white thread of the new moon hanging in the midst, and below her the evening star? No day of the year, no hour of the day, but spreads before you its celestial vision.

There is the marvellous window of Human

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Life. On what dramas it looks out! These men and women about you, laboring in their shops, chatting on the streets, doing up the household work and looking for father to come home; — what a world of pleasure and pain, of homely sacrifice, of simple happiness, of magnificent endurance, is going on among them all. You cannot read the stories? Then sit no longer by your window, but issue out among them by the door of *Service.* Go as helper, and see what burdens you will find. Go with ready sympathy for joy or woe, and see what triumphs and what tragedies will open themselves to you.

And here stands one of the noblest outlooks and entrances to your house, if you have kept it open: it is named the Communion of Saints. It is that avenue of sympathy by which you not only reach the common interests of mankind, but, through some touch of fellow-feeling in yourself, enter into the faith of the faithful, the courage of the brave, the tenderness of the lover, the strength of the conqueror. Many a blessed revelation is given to the willing and waiting soul, but scarcely any that surpasses this, — the disclosures that sometimes come to us of the exquisite goodness in human hearts. Well for us if we find out that goodness because

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we have that in ourselves which is akin to it and calls it out. Well for us, even if it comes in response not to our sympathy, but to our defect and need,—the forgiveness of a pure heart that we have wronged falling upon us with its blessing, the help that answers our cry, the heart that takes upon itself our burden. Human help in our need, human forgiveness of our wrong-doing, human love in our loneliness: these are the sacraments through which, at their sweetest and purest, we feel a divine help and forgiveness and love flowing into our souls.

"Blessed," said Jesus, "are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Shall *see* God,—not merely have thoughts about him; shall see him here, not only in a future life. What though we can form of him no bodily image? The soul that is open to see beauty, harmony, goodness, love, sees God himself; for these things are of his very substance. The heart in whose life-current flow moral ardor, love of men, and love of good, is very child of God.

Yet, my friend, one or two thoughts still rise that trouble you. You say that with greater openness to the realities of life comes the sense not only of beauty, but of ugliness, of sin fighting with goodness, of chaos struggling against order. Some of your windows, you tell me,

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look out upon dark valleys where men miserably perish. In your own heart goes on alternation, often sharp and bitter, of evil with good. How reconcile these things with any sense of God? I reply, there is no answer that satisfies, so long as you only *look on.* From the days of Job till now, the human mind has striven with the problem, and striven in vain. But throw yourself into the fight, heart and soul, and, somehow, you feel that God is on your side. To the mere beholder, it looks often as if He were as much for the evil as for the good. But, of the souls that mingle in the fray, he who is consciously and wilfully in the wrong feels in his heart of hearts that, so long as he is on that side, some divine power is against him; and he who is earnestly for the good has it in his deepest consciousness that some almighty power is with and for him. You may defeat him, you may overthrow his cause, you may kill him, but you cannot kill his faith. He says, "I will trust Him, though he slay me"; and the heart of mankind answers that cry of triumph in the very clutch of defeat. It is not the workers and fighters for the right who despair of God. It is not the people who are in hand-to-hand struggle with the misery of city dens. It is not the men who break the chains of their own vices

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and find again the lost purity and sweetness. You will never lose God, so long as you are throwing your whole strength against the evil within you and toward the highest fidelity you know. He may elude your thought, your emotion may not consciously stir toward him; but he has hold of your hand. Sooner or later, the numb sense will thrill and quicken. Fear not to call to him in your extremity, whether you hear his answer or not. Fear not to give that upward glance, that cry of the soul to a higher help, which is its impulse when the battle is sharp.

If, again, you ask me for an assurance that those vast powers, those sublime realities, which we name God, make personal account of *you*, so that your own safety is somehow cared for and not lost as a disregarded atom among mightier things, again I say, no man can prove it for you, but you may slowly and surely come to it for yourself. As you set yourself in earnest to the business of right living, you will more and more feel what a sublime thing life is, how divine is the universe in which you are a part; and with that sense of the blessedness of life there comes to every true soul a most humble, grateful sense of something *given*. "Not of myself, it is

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the gift of God!" is its instinctive, deepest word about whatever highest achievement or sweetest enjoyment comes to it. Train yourself to find the good in what seems evil, to make of disaster an opportunity for your courage, to master suffering by patience, to learn from sorrow sympathy. So will there grow upon you an assurance that through all forms of what seems evil there is working a higher good. Learn, too, not to importune Providence like a teasing child. Be not always asking, "Am I cared for?" Forget that question sometimes, while you care for other people. Selfishness toward God is as unlovely as any other kind of selfishness. Here, too, the word of Jesus stands always true,—"He that loseth his life shall find it." And, finally, be patient. Upon the loyal soul there dawn from time to time more glorious mornings than it ever saw before. You may come to learn that life contains no more wonderful and blessed thing than God's surprises. A man struggles bravely and unsuccessfully with an evil habit, and suddenly a change of circumstances lifts him out of its reach. A life of faithful service is lonely and hungry for human love, and some day a great and sacred friendship comes to it. A soul walks for years the patient path of duty,

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vainly longing for a sense of the living God, and in some unexpectant hour the Divine Presence shines full upon it. Nor is it alone by sudden surprises that we come to know how "God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame." To steady fidelity come steady growth and enlarging vision, as surely as the harvest follows the sowing. There are better things in store for you than you know. In the calendar of your future there are days marked for angelic visits. The angels may come disguised, but come they surely will. Yours be it to have for them an open door, and a house where amid firmly knit habits and pure affections they shall find a home.

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THE winds that o'er my ocean run
Reach through all worlds beyond the sun,—
Through life, through death, through fate, through time,
Grand breaths of God, they sweep sublime.

Eternal trades, they cannot veer,
And, blowing, teach us how to steer;
And well for him whose joy, whose care,
Is but to keep before them fair.

O thou God's mariner, heart of mine,
Spread canvas to the airs divine!
Spread sail! and let thy fortune be
Forgotten in thy destiny.

A thread of law runs through thy prayer,
Stronger than iron cables are;
And love and longing toward her goal
Are pilots sweet to guide the soul.

DAVID A. WASSON.

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VI.

THE FRIENDLINESS OF LAW.

I ASSUME, my friend, that you to whom I am writing are heartily in earnest about reaching that noblest way of living which we call the kingdom of God. Now, I want to point out the necessity for you to study and understand the instrument with which you are trying to do this work. No man takes it in hand to run a train of cars from Springfield to Boston, unless he thoroughly understands the construction and working of a locomotive. He may not know much of the general principles of natural philosophy, though even such knowledge may stand him in good stead; but he must at any rate understand the practical operation of the machine he handles, the use of each lever and valve, the amount of power he needs, and the way to generate and control that power. So of any other kind of fine work: you cannot even make a beginning without some practical knowledge of the machine or tool with which it is done. And, for that greatest of all arts, right living, it is a first necessity that you un-

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derstand something of your *self*. There is no other engine so wonderful and exquisite as a man. There is none whose right use depends more on its being understood.

That is a childish notion we have, when we suppose that, in order to "be good," all that is necessary is to try very hard. It is equally childish to suppose, when we fail in that attempt, that we have only to run to God with a prayer, and he will make it all right. Why, a little girl cannot so much as make a patchwork quilt simply by trying: she must *learn how*. And not even her mother can help her over her difficulties without setting her to attentively and patiently watch the process of sewing, and practise it herself until she gets it right. Do you imagine you can work out that grandest thing on earth, a noble character, without patiently studying out the process,—without learning something of the working of your own faculties, the conditions that help or hinder them, the relations with the outside world and with other men that are most favorable? A man who is going to lift a heavy weight studies and experiments until he finds in just what position of body he can lift it to best advantage. So you must study and experiment as to what position, what attitude,

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gives you the best purchase for carrying each one of your different loads.

It is just here, I think, that we get most help from the discoveries that men have made since the time of Jesus, and especially in the last two or three centuries, and in this time in which we are living now. We must still see, just as Jesus taught, that the supreme thing in life is character. We must still, as he did, fix our highest hopes and efforts on the union of all mankind in a fellowship of fidelity and love and trust. But, as to the practical ways of reaching that end, we have certainly learned a great deal since the New Testament was written. In our own day, the world has one very great lesson set it to learn in this direction,—a lesson over which it stumbles and boggles as it has over every other, giving it a wrong reading, fighting over it, frightened at it. That lesson is the perfect *order* of the universe. Just now, it sometimes seems as if one-half the world were exulting and the other half terrified because law seems somehow to be taking the place of a living God. When we get over our fright, we shall see that law is as sublime a revelation of the living God as are beauty and love and life itself.

Indeed, any right-meaning man or woman

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may speedily find out how real and great a friend is that fixed order of things which we call "law." It means practically that, when certain things are done, certain other things are sure to follow. It means that the forces of the universe are working together to a common end; and that just as fast as we find out the true direction and nature of a particular force, and put ourselves in line with it, it helps us on our way. Take, as one great example of the matter, the relation of the body to the soul, of a man's physical condition to his moral condition. It is a thing which with very little observation you can test for yourself, that there is no virtue or grace of character which is not helped or hindered by your bodily condition. Sweetness of temper, geniality, serenity, are almost impossible to one who is dyspeptic or whose nerves are overstrained and jaded. The excess and lawlessness of appetite, that ravages and consumes men, gets its impulse and fuel largely from morbid physical conditions. The chaste and temperate soul needs for its home a pure and well-kept body. That self-forgetfulness in care for others, which is the flower and crown of life, is almost forbidden to one whose disordered system keeps him self-conscious and self-centred. Even the clear sense of spiritual

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things, that vision of God which is the highest joy of the soul, needs, as one condition of its most perfect exercise, a finely-strung and harmonious body. Faith, says a French writer, is an attribute of health. The natural, normal attitude of a nature sound and sane throughout, in body and mind, is an attitude of *trust*,— in self, in God, in the universe; and with that trust an upwelling and overflowing joy and energy.

Now, this close dependence of the soul upon the body is treated by some people as a grievance and a stumbling-block. They wish they were rid of their bodies. Perhaps they pray for grace to overcome a bad temper or a vicious appetite or a sluggish faith; and, if they are told, "Your body is in a bad condition, and God himself will not help you until that is righted," they feel as if God were denied to them. But when we accept the world as God has made it, instead of insisting on a world of our own imagining; when we set ourselves to the care of our bodies just as religiously as we do to acts of worship or of benevolence; when we cultivate sound sleep and good digestion and full vitality with as much assiduity and intelligence as men apply to money-getting,— then we find this tremendous force of physical

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law, which looked so grim and cruel, won over to our side. The giant has become our friend and servant. For our serenity, self-forgetfulness, faith, courage, joy, we have laid supply-pipes that run back to the great reservoirs among the eternal hills.

Sometimes, another application of the truth is forced upon us. We find ourselves suffering from physical disabilities transmitted under the mysterious, sure law of inheritance; and for these we find in ourselves no perfect remedy. Yet, even here, we may win law to our side: we may see to it that by no transgression or neglect of ours is a farther burden handed on to our descendants. By the temperance and order and health of our own lives, we may make our best legacy to posterity. On some is laid a heavier obligation, a harder and therefore nobler service. There is no truer heroism than that of men and women who, rather than transmit a dangerous liability to bodily or mental disease, have refrained from marriage, so denying themselves the best of earthly happiness rather than transmit a blight to other lives. At such points, the sphere of what we call physical law impinges on an ampler order. The conditions of man's bodily estate give him guidance and regulation, but they are not his su-

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preme and final law. If you are an invalid, do your best to get well; but, if you must remain an invalid, strive still for the unselfishness and serenity which are the best possessions of health. There are no sublimer victories than some that are won on sick-beds. Nothing so rebukes the failure of us who are in health, nothing more inspires and reassures, than the sight of some people who, under hopeless disability and pain, maintain a sweetness which shames our querulousness, and a steadfast calm which hushes our disquiet.

But the first duty is health. When a ship by unavoidable accident runs on a rock, the captain may perhaps, in getting her off, give the highest proof of his seamanship; but his first business is not to let her run on the rocks. We ought by this time to be learning that health is a duty. We ought to be understanding and practising a religion of the body. Its august and awful and beneficent sanctions are plainly revealed. The law of retribution works just as surely on the body as the soul. Health is a powerful ally of right living and sound thinking and clear seeing. It is the one parent, as loyal will is the other parent, of sweet temper and well-balanced life and serene vision.

I have taken this subject of the body as an ex-

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ample, and a conspicuous example, of that divine order in which we are placed, that divine law which we need to understand in order to obey. In a like way, we may trace an order and law in the working of our wills and affections and all that goes to make up character. Take, for instance, the familiar law of habit. If I succeed to-day in doing a thing which is hard, the same thing will be easier for me to-morrow. If I yield to a difficulty to-day, it will be all the harder to-morrow to resist. By giving to the repetition of an act of duty a fixed regularity, I can multiply my moral power in that direction as much as a man multiplies his material power when he gets hold of a lever. By faithful habit, I can make that which was at first laborious come to be after a while less difficult, then easy, and perhaps at last spontaneous and delightful. Here, for instance, is a boy in whom conscience is strong. To a clear summons to choose between right and wrong, he is quick to respond; but he is not by nature generous. He is strong in his feelings and desires. He knows the value of his possessions, and is inclined to hold them tight. But his mother trains him, by wise appeals to his conscience, to share his good things with others. She educates him through his imagination: "Think, if you were

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in your brother's place, how you would feel." And, by degrees, the disposition to share gets to be spontaneous in him, becomes, as the true phrase is, "a second nature"; and the grasping boy grows into a bountiful man, whose very joy is in giving. It is a transformation such as when into a wild apple-tree is grafted a shoot that bears finest fruit: the one is just as truly a natural process as the other; and the process by which generosity is grafted into the boy's nature comes under what we call the law of habit.

So, again, a man finds it almost impossible to pray. When he makes the attempt, the idea of the being he is addressing is so vague that he must either go on saying empty words or fall into silence, the latter being much the best course. But he can do this: with his first waking consciousness, he can set himself to take a serious, manly view of the day before him. He can send away the swarm of petty thoughts about matters of detail and externality, telling them he is engaged with other visitors. He can recall to himself the one thing best worth doing that day,—not to make money or to spend pleasant hours, but to be a man. He ought to know pretty well on what lines his difficulty is likely to come, whether in being

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irritable, or domineering, or sharp in his bargains, or self-absorbed, or whatever it be; and now, in this quiet hour, he can take a good, full look at his enemy, and make up his mind to beat him. It is a good time, too, for giving his thoughts a range quite beyond himself,— beyond even his own moral struggles,— a good time, there in the stillness, for going into the realm of other lives. His wife,— what needs has she for help, for kindness, for sympathy, that he can meet? His children,— how can he make the day sweeter to them? This acquaintance, who is having a hard time; this friend, who dropped a word to you yesterday that you hardly noticed in your hurry, but that comes up to you now, revealing in him some finer trait, some deeper hunger, than you had guessed before,— now, you can think these things over. So you get your day somewhat into right perspective and proportion before you begin it. And then there comes one word which I think every honest heart can humbly and reverently say,— "Thy will be done." May God's will be done,— may goodness, truth, tenderness, purity, have way and prevail. In that aspiration, you enthrone your nobler desires above all baser wants, you put the good of the whole above your mere personal good. Some sense

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there may come to you, too,— a sense which, in a thoughtful and reverent man, should grow deeper the longer he lives,— that that little life of yours which you see and are conscious of is a part of some greater and grander destiny in which you and all mankind are embraced. You cannot measure its scope nor foresee its issues, you are humbled and awed before its mystery; but there is in you a hope that all is working toward a consummation better than all we see or know. And so, with a sense of self-surrender to a higher power, you say, "Thy will be done."

Again, when the day is done, you look thoughtfully back over it. You measure your own success and failure by the highest standards. You see something for which to be glad, something for which to be humbled. But I think, to any one who faithfully and steadily tries to lead the best life he can, the thoughtful backward look over the day will come to yield more and more the sense that it is a good and blessed thing to live, and, with that sense, some irresistible motion of gratitude toward the source and giver of life. As one lies down to sleep, passing so serenely into the realm of unconsciousness, there may well rise in the pure and reverent heart a deep, inscrutable

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trust. It gives no reasons for itself, and needs none. The will yields itself to some tranquil sense of rest upon an all-sufficient stay, as naturally as the body yields itself to slumber.

I think that any one who will make of this upward look of the heart a *habit* will find ingrafted and growing in himself the true spirit of prayer. Real prayer is so natural to the soul, the sense of dependence on a higher strength, affection toward a higher good, repose upon a higher will, is so normal to man, that it grows easily. In the soil given by a loyal will and pure affections and a reverent mind, it takes root and thrives like wheat cast into the prairies of Minnesota. The wheat does not perfect itself in a day: no more will the spirit of prayer in you. To rightly pray, to wholly merge one's will in the divine will, to purely love, to perfectly trust,—it is the achievement of a lifetime!

In this matter of prayer, you see, I am illustrating again the power and beneficence of what we call the law of habit. Habit is one element of the great framework of law in which we are set. And the way into all spiritual attainment lies partly through understanding that settled order of cause and effect under which God has placed man. This is only an-

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other way of saying that, if you are going to run a train, you must know something of your locomotive and your track. You must have at least a fair working knowledge of your own self and the world you are in.

It is said, too, that every locomotive, even of those made in the same shops and upon the same pattern, has its peculiarities of practical operation: so that the engineer works to the best advantage when he has always the same engine and comes to understand perfectly its individual ways. But what infinite diversity is there in human beings! Each one of us has to find out what is *for him* the best thing and the possible thing. Just as for each one there exists a special ideal of character, so that, if we were all to do our best, society would no more consist of a company of monotonous units than a summer landscape resembles a checker-board; so for each one of us there is a particular regimen, which his nature requires for its best development, and which it is his business to find out and fearlessly to follow. One needs only seven hours' sleep, and another needs nine. My neighbor requires almost constant society, and I want a good deal of solitude. Here is a household that has a special capacity and adaptedness for hospitality; and yonder is an-

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other in which the members, not less generous and friendly, are so perfectly fitted to make a little society of their own that a constant succession of visitors would mar its fine harmony. Let each be true to its own law. We are wont to be tyrannized over by the conventional agreements of society, imposing uniformity where nature says diversity. Public opinion among us is despotic. Its despotism is largely exercised for good. But it often infringes on the sacredness of the individual nature, which has its own clear rights and strong needs, and is not to be forced into the best of cast-iron moulds without injury. Find out then what is *your* highest law. Still *law* you see,—conformity not with an outward mechanical standard, but with those conditions under which you make the best growth and do the best service. If the social life of your acquaintances goes on chiefly in a round of calls, visits, parties, which you find trivial and profitless, stand aloof from it and give yourself to better things, though you be deemed unsocial. If all your friends are reading and talking about books which you cannot understand or get enrichment from, frankly own your incapacity, and read such books as you can understand. If the people about you are carrying on their business or

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their benevolence at a pace which drains the life out of you, resolutely take a slower pace, be called a laggard, make less money, accomplish less work than they, but be what you were meant to be and can be. You have your natural limit of power as much as an engine,—ten-horse power, or twenty, or a hundred. You are fit to do certain sorts of work, and you need a certain kind and amount of fuel and a certain sort of handling.

This whole truth of a fixed divine order of things, a universal law, is often misunderstood, misapplied, treated as if it involved the denial and destruction of the fundamental realities of religion, God and the human soul. It is often thought of as if, on the one hand, it made of the universe a cold, dead machine instead of the abode of a living and loving God, and, in another aspect, denied human free-will and reduced man to a soulless automaton. Now, this last notion is one that any honest man ought to be able to dispose of for himself. If we know anything under heaven, in a practical way and for practical purposes, we know that we can exercise a regulating power in our own conduct, can choose the good or the evil, and that as we choose rightly or wrongly we grow better or worse. My free-will is not less,

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but more, when I find that it acts through a most perfect and exquisite mechanism. I am not less a man, but more, when I find that I can make law my servant; can, by the care of my body, and by intelligent conformity to the conditions of the world I live in and of my own nature, get for myself clearer thinking, finer feeling, larger action, than when I trusted to sheer blind force of will. And just as much as the fear lest law annihilate human will is idle and worse than idle, so much is the fear lest law crowd God out of the universe a senseless, panic fear. That universal law which sometimes seems to us a veil shutting out Deity is rather a newly discovered attribute of Deity, whose brightness dazzles and confuses us. It confuses us, because we cling to the old notion of God as a vast human figure overlooking the world, answering those who cry out to him, and putting in his finger now and then to change the course of events. We are but slowly coming to see a new augustness, a new beneficence, in that order and unity of procedure in the universe which modern observation reveals. We are coming to see that law, just as fast as it is understood, puts into our hands new weapons, new instruments, to accomplish more swiftly and effectually that for which we

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have gropingly striven. It is dawning upon us that order, and not caprice, is the attribute of free-will and of love, of perfect humanity and of God.

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Ask and receive! 'tis sweetly said;
Yet what to plead for know I not;
For Wish is worsted, Hope o'ersped,
And aye to thanks returns my thought.
If I would pray,
I've nought to say
But this: That God may be God still.
For him to live
Is still to give,
And sweeter than my wish his will.

I have a stake in every star,
In every beam that fills the day;
All hearts of men my coffers are,
My ores arterial tides convey;
The fields, the skies,
The sweet replies
Of thought to thought are my gold-dust:
The oaks, the brooks,
And speaking looks
Of lovers' faith and friendship's trust.

"All mine is thine," the sky-soul saith:
"The wealth I am, must thou become;
Richer and richer, breath by breath,
Immortal gain, immortal room!"
And since all his
Mine also is,
Life's gift outruns my fancies far,
And drowns the dream
In larger stream,
As morning drinks the morning star.

David A. Wasson.

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VII.

FULLNESS OF LIFE.

One of the most expressive sayings recorded of Jesus is this: "I am come that they might have *life*, and that they might have it more abundantly." Life is a great word. It is a larger word than religion or goodness or character. Fullness of life,—that is what we want. In our efforts toward right living, we often fail, not for want of a pure and strong purpose, but because we have not in ourselves enough vital force to give effect to our purpose. We are like an engine which does not do its work well, because it has not a sufficient head of steam on. The people of Springfield know what it is to have a good water supply. They have in their streets and houses pipes which run back to great reservoirs on the higher ground, whence the water comes with strong and steady pressure. In the worst droughts, we have plenty always for drinking, plenty for bathing, enough for all the shops and factories, enough to keep streets moist and lawns beautiful and gardens blooming all through the hot summer. A city

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so supplied is a good illustration of the man whose inner life is fed from full, unfailing springs. We may say that the pipes which lead to the springs — pipes laid with care and labor and cost — are the man's *habits*. The secret of noble and joyful living lies largely in putting ourselves in steady communication with the reservoirs divinely set for the supply of man's soul.

The first of these that I name is bodily vigor. The mother of half the virtues and half the happiness possible to man is full, exuberant health. A man's body is his closest companion,— rather, so far as this life is concerned, it is an inseparable part of himself. There is no marriage so close as that of soul and body, and it is for better or worse according as the intelligent will make the body its friend and servant or lets it become a foe. That worst human misery, a discordant marriage, is a true type of the man or woman in whom noble purpose is baffled, and a sweet spirit yields jarring notes, because stomach or liver or nerve-system is out of order.

I am not going to treat at large of that boundless subject, the religion of the body. There are two special points that may be just touched on here,— the two functions on which

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most depends,—digestion and sleep. Digestion is a subject for a treatise rather than a paragraph. But I think there is one sin in regard to it which we commit not merely as individuals here and there, but almost as a people. We are prone to slight our eating. We eat too fast. We are too busy to linger over our meals, and too care-taking to enjoy them. We are a terribly serious race, we Americans! Getting money, saving our souls, whatever it is, we drive at it might and main. We hardly stop to enjoy anything by the way. We are half-inclined to scorn all pleasure that does not yield some direct and tangible return of profit to purse or body or soul. Every gratification and indulgence has to plead its cause before the severe New England conscience, and prove its reason for being. That it *is* a pleasure, that it yields direct enjoyment to some normal human faculty, avails it very little before that solemn tribunal. I have traveled in Europe: I have, like a good American, preferred my own people and country to every other, and, when play was done, have been glad to come back and go to work here at home. But in one thing I had to recognize a prodigious advantage on the part of the Europeans, at least the inhabitants of the Continent: they

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enjoy life as they go along a great deal more than we do. They may not have as high ideals or as austere consciences, but they understand a great deal better how to get pleasure out of little things. The traveler sees the German tranquilly enjoying his music and his beer and his pipe; sees the dinner everywhere made a sort of daily festival; sees the Frenchman alert and gay with a hundred little enjoyments, and the very beggars of Italy basking in the sun in such pure luxuriousness as our merchant princes and Christian philanthropists do not stop long enough to taste. Here we have, to be sure, our pleasures and indulgences; but to a great extent they live, as it were, under suspicion and protest on the part of the sober-minded element in the community. Even on points where no conscious moral scruple is raised, many of us are in loath or grudging or neglectful attitude toward the simpler pleasures of life. I wonder how many good people in their secret hearts feel a slight contempt for any frank and hearty enjoyment of the pleasures of the table? Ascribing our frames to a divine workman, we yet find in the sensitiveness of the palate no reason why we should heartily minister to it. The old psalmist was not so superior to creature comforts. He.

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blessed the Lord for satisfying his mouth with good things, so that his youth was renewed like the eagle's. He gave joyous thanks for bread that strengthens man's heart and wine that makes it glad. But, since we must needs seek some other justification for bodily gratification, this is to be noted: that the social meal, leisurely taken, with skillful ministry to bodily tastes and wants, with the family gathered for the interchange of whatever entertainment and good-fellowship they each can bring, with a little after-time of rest and enjoyment before serious pursuits are taken up again,— such a repast is one of the finest products of civilization. The daily routine is meager and insufficient that does not include two or three such occasions. Simply as matter of physical regimen, that is the most wholesome way of taking food, and best gives it a chance to do its work. It is a losing investment for you, energetic brain-worker, to slip in as apology for dinner a solitary cold lunch in the midst of the day's labor, with hardly as much pause before and after as two parenthesis-marks might stand for. You might well take a leaf from the book of yonder hod-carrier, who pieces out the frugal contents of his dinner-pail with an idle hour on the sunny side of a

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wall, where he smokes his pipe and gossips with his comrades. Do not say that your way does not hurt you. Your stomach is not an insignificant member of the bodily community, which will put up with slights. It is the great boiler that drives your whole engine; and it will have plenty of fuel, of good food and leisure to digest it in, or some day it will take an inexorable revenge.

I have sometimes thought that among a people like ours, strenuous, hard-working, and liable to ravage by nervous disorders, an appropriate form of daily salutation would be, "How do you sleep?" Good sleep is at once the sign and the cause of so much else that is good. Almost of itself, it implies at least the possibility of efficient work and an even temper. It ministers directly to clear thinking, harmonious relations, happy living. Sometimes it must be sacrificed, as by the mother of a young child or by those who care for the sick. But, under all ordinary circumstances, it ought to be guarded like a wellspring of life. Work that interferes with sound and sufficient sleep is done at fatal cost. "Never," says Mr. Munger (in his admirable book *On the Threshold*), "never, except for the most imperative reason, should one break in upon that

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sacred process for which the sun withdraws itself and silence broods over the hemisphere." About sleep, and about all things that vitally touch the bodily health, that is a false way of thinking which assigns to them a secondary place upon the scale of moral measurements. There are good people who think it not only allowable, but imperative upon them, to make any sacrifice of nerve force or bodily vitality, when there is a resulting good to some other person to be secured by it. But it is broadly true that the preservation of one's bodily health is a direct and sacred duty,—as much a duty, for example, as to pay one's money debts. The demand that I shall impair my nervous force for another person's benefit is like a demand to give money. It may be a duty or not, according to circumstances. Before giving money, I must think whether my creditors have a claim upon it,—in other words, whether it is mine to give. And just so, before I seriously impair my bodily force, I must consider whether the withdrawal will leave me able to meet the other demands upon me.

The due care of the body is part of that natural worship and service which God has ordained. To the reverent mind, life presents everywhere a divine order. Just as men mark

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off the year by anniversaries and saints' days and fasts and festivals public and private, so the natural year and natural day has each its own orderly appeal to the soul of man, beautiful, majestic, perfect. Each sunrise calls him to praise, to quickened life, to new conquest. Each sunset falls like a heavenly benediction of peace and rest. Spring bids him to the sowing and autumn to the harvest. Winter's cold says to him, "Be brave!" its scantiness says, "Be provident!" Summer sings to him, "Be glad!" And, with each returning night, a soft, cool hand is laid upon his brow, and a voice with a mother's gentleness and a father's command says to him, "*Sleep.*"

The sound body, the open mind, the open heart,—these are the channels through which there may flow in upon us supplies exhaustless and divine. What we largely need is to be lifted out of petty and ignoble affairs. Life's most oppressive aspect, I think, is not when we look at its great tragedies or even at its sins, but when we get a sense of the small, dull, petty round in which so much of it is passed. One of our greatest troubles with ourselves is not so much that we do anything very bad as that we do not appear to do anything at all. We pass our days in routine pursuits. Trivial

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cares, small anxieties, half-mechanical duties, seem to make up the whole. We want enlargement, we want nobleness. See now what resources lie close at hand.

Suppose there were on exhibition in this city a collection of paintings and statuary by all the greatest artists of ancient and modern times. How eager we should all be to visit it! How we should save our time and hoard our savings, if need were, to purchase such a pleasure. Suppose, too, that by some subtlest device this art-gallery was so constructed that the visitor, instead of at last becoming physically wearied by the stimulus to his eyes and mind, were, through some unconscious process, steadily invigorated, so as to go away stronger than he came. Suppose this exhibition were free to all, and always accessible by day or night. Here would seem to be at least one grand resource against the dullness and monotony of which we complain. Yet this, which seems like a flight of fancy, is a true but inadequate illustration of that reality which we possess. He that hath eyes to see, let him see! Walk out with me this wintry day. A wonderful white mantle covers all the earth. Its surface, now so dazzling and radiant, will by and by, when the sun begins to sink, be tinged with most

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delicate hues, faint rosy flushes and bluish shadows on the dimpled hillsides, trees outlined on the snow in soft silhouette, a celestial light upon the distant heights. In this morning brilliance, how the icicles sparkle, how they outblaze all the treasures of royal courts! Lavish Nature sweeps them away with a laugh, as the sun rides higher. To-night, she will create a new supply. The strong north-west wind blows health in our faces, shouts and laughs as it greets us, welcomes the children of the north-land who have come out to wrestle with it. Overhead, it is tossing and tearing great ragged masses of soft clouds, through which appear the clear depths of tenderest blue sky. Over yonder, on the Berkshire hills, is a driving snow-storm. The great sun rides like a charioted king. Even in this stern season, the earth is full of minute and delicate forms of beauty. The silvery, feathery golden-rods along the road-side delight the eye as much as when they flamed in their autumn splendor. The trees take us now into their confidence, and reveal all the fine and various anatomy of bough and twig, which summer's luxuriance will hide. With each hour, the world's aspect changes, as if under the hands of a million invisible scene-shifters. This morning, I looked

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out before daybreak. The stars shone with lustrous brilliance; the night-wind sang its mystical song; Nature seemed to be holding some solemn, jubilant revel, in whose pure, celestial joy the heart of man was bidden to partake. A few hours hence, and the daily divine spectacle of the sunset will unfold before us its loveliness and peace and awe. We dig and toil, we worry and fret, and all the while close over us bends the infinite wonder and beauty of Nature, saying: "Look up, my child! Feel my smile, and be glad!"

Who takes so much as one solid hour in every day to enjoy this companionship? How many of us make a daily walk as much our habit as the daily meals, and in walking heartily give ourselves up to what lies about us,—not going blinded and wrapped up in our own little affairs, like a man who should walk through the Louvre or the Vatican reading a newspaper? Who comes an eager and thankful guest to this table which God daily spreads? We all, with one accord, begin to make excuse. One says, I have my business, my household cares, my church. One says, I am not strong nor a good walker. Another says, I don't know what you mean by this beauty of Nature that you make such a fuss about. We are apt at

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the best to give these things a secondary and subordinate place. When the work is all done, every room swept, every bargain driven, then we may look about us a little and see what the face of the earth is like. When the weather is just right, neither hot nor cold, when the roads are good, when a perfectly congenial companion invites us, and we have nothing else to do, then perhaps we will go to walk. When earth has absolutely nothing else to engage us, perhaps we will glance into paradise!

I count it supreme good fortune for a child to early learn the love of mother earth. It is hard to begin that lesson later in life. Of all the kindnesses I owe to the love-guided wisdom of my father and mother, there is hardly one for which I thank them so much as for sending me every summer, when a child, to spend two or three months upon a lonely farm in one of the hill towns of New England. I think the pure and simple happiness of those days sank deep into my blood. I remember no conscious ecstacies in the beauty of Nature, but long happy days to which her companionship lent a half-conscious, ever-present delight. I remember the since unknown beauty and freshness of the early summer mornings, and the boyish races to the favorite tree under

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which the few great, rosy apples, fallen in the night, lay in the dewy grass. I remember the feeling to my bare feet of the pastures over which we scampered through the day like young colts. The little brook where we built dams and raced the boats we had whittled out in the winter; the rocky, forest-covered ledges we climbed to cut fish-poles and gather birch-bark and hunt the chestnuts that gleamed brown amid the grass or nestled in half-open velvet-lined burrs; the shaking open the heavy swaths of wet grass behind the mowers, and sharing their lunch of doughnuts and cheese; the "raking after" the hay-cart, and the excitement of hurrying a load into the barn before a threatening thunder-shower; the making of elder pop-guns and corn-stalk fiddles, and the setting of squirrel-traps; the Sunday-morning rides to the meeting-house on the hill; the sacred and thrilling hush that on that day lay upon the woods and fields; the falling of the cool evening shadows; the cry of the whip-poor-will and the chirp of the August crickets, — it all comes back to me now. I think it has never gone away, but blended with the springs of the life-current. Children are so naturally drawn to Nature! They love the grass, the dirt, the water, as if some sure instinct drew

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them straight to the lap of their great mother. Let them learn to know and to love her. She will be their life-long friend, a friend who "never did betray the heart that loved her," and who whispers always new and more sacred meanings to the ears that rightly listen.

> "'Tis her privilege,
> Through all the years of this our life, to lead
> From joy to joy; for she can so inform
> The mind that is within us, so impress
> With quietness and beauty, and so feed
> With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
> Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
> Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
> The dreary intercourse of daily life,
> Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
> Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
> Is full of blessings."

It were much, if by free recourse to out-of-door life we only got more oxygen into our lungs, more red corpuscles into our blood, more firmness to our nerves and vigor to our muscles. But along with this is offered another gift,—a healing interruption of that strain of work and responsibility which needs must rest on all men and women who are living in a manly and womanly way. And Nature has a still higher ministry,—one which cannot be conveyed by words to such as have not felt it,

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but which is known to some as one of the surest and best of realities. The beauty of the external world may come to give to the reverent and receptive soul a sacramental sense of God. Such feelings are sometimes profoundest when they do not shape themselves in articulate thought. When we are nearest God, we hardly name him to ourselves,—any more than the name of our nearest human friend rises to our lips when we are heart to heart with him. All highest experiences take our souls into that near presence of the infinite, where thoughts or words can hardly follow them. So we cannot explain what it is, we only know it is something intensely real, when the lovely and majestic presence of Nature breathes into us a peace in which all our trouble is healed, a calm which emancipates from every doubt and fear, an adoration as before some divine good. The exercise of all our noblest faculties — thought, conscience, aspiration, love, the sense of beauty —leads us as by different paths to the verge where we look upon and mingle in the eternal, divine reality.

Our idea of God becomes larger as we become larger and our sight takes in a wider sweep. Our traditions and training have accustomed us to think of him almost exclusively

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under the attributes of moral character. Moral qualities must indeed blend closely with any near and living sense of God, and at its heart must be enfolded that supreme quality which we name love. Yet the conceptions drawn from moral character and the personal affections do not exhaust or fully measure our sense of Deity. Something stirs within us when we look upon the ocean in its wrath or upon the steadfast mountains, when we listen to noble music, when we take in the full perfection of a flower or watch the joy of young living things, — something that does not fall within our catalogue of moral virtues, yet most intimately belongs to our worship of the highest. There is a revelation of God in all beauty, all sublimity, all power, all joy. As we open ourselves to these, it is God's own being that flows into us and fills us.

So from these humble habitations of ours we learn to lay the supply-pipes of use and habit, back to the unfailing mountain lakes. We train and husband a vigor of body that shall buoy us up. We open ourselves to all the beauty of Nature, and become citizens of her out-of-doors commonwealth. And, to name now only one more of the sources of power and inspiration, we have at our constant command the best

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wisdom, the finest feeling, of those men who have been the teachers and leaders of the race. The best they had to give is stored up for us in books. We are wont to think too lightly of the friendship there is in books. It is human friendships, the touch of mind to mind, of heart to heart, that minister to man's needs more abundantly than any other resource. The treasure of our life is those friends who are better than we, wiser than we. If we had plenty of such, if we had them always at command, and always in their best moments, how rich we should think ourselves! I raise my eyes to my bookshelves, and there stand such friends,—the world's best, its saints and sages; in their noblest mood, in the perfect ideal as it rose on their thought, unmarred by the imperfect performance; the ripest fruit of their lives; to whose maturing there went what labors, what sorrows, what laughter, and what tears! For this, they lived and wrought,—that garnered here for me should lie amplest thought and fairest image, humor to give salt to the dullest hour, poetry to transfigure life at its barest, sweet humanity, pure inspiration, perfect trust. Am I down-hearted under the weight of paltry cares? At will, I can bid Emerson's clarion wake me to the thrilling sense of a

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divine universe. Am I half-conscious of slipping into pleasant, irresponsible indulgence that saps away the fiber of manhood? I can open Carlyle's page, and be roused as if by the thunders of Sinai. From a mood of loneliness, I can take refuge in the genial and reviving companionship of Charles Lamb. Would I escape from myself, Shakespeare will lend the key that opens the chamber of Hamlet's mind or Juliet's heart. If I am hungry for society, I can open my Thackeray and meet Colonel Newcome and Clive, Warrington and Pendennis and Laura, Madame de Florac and Ethel, Major Dobbin and the Little Sister. From the din of our own time, I can at a step go thirty centuries back into the fresh-glowing, youthful world of Homer. I can hear Socrates talking with the young men of Athens. Plato will unfold to me his ideal Republic, and Augustine his City of God. I can look through the eyes of Dante on the Purgatory and Hell and Heaven before which millions of hearts have beat quick with shuddering and with transport. Bunyan, the Dante of Puritanism, will make the Calvinist faith live before my imagination, in its tender rapture, its heart-quaking terror. I can listen to Cromwell's words to his soldiers. Evelyn and Pepys will welcome me into their

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English households, and make me a guest at weddings and christenings of two hundred years ago. I can go a-fishing in Izaak Walton's company. Livingstone will share with me his lonely night-watch in the heart of Africa. I can bivouac with gallant Bartlett before the lines of Petersburg, or share the scanty rations and dying hopes of its brave defenders. Walter Scott will walk with me beside the Tweed and over the heathery moors, while Maida stalks beside us. Rab and his Friends admit me graciously to their society. I sit an unseen guest in Haworth parsonage, and hear the Brontë sisters, strange children of genius and solitude, rehearse to each other their stories. From his imperial tent beside the Danube, Marcus Aurelius sends to me his private diary, and with it comes from Rome a packet from the slave Epictetus,— note-books of two brave and wise travelers who, in a cloudy twilight, walked manfully along the appointed road. Great-hearted Luther sings his German hymns of cheer. Reverently listening, I hear in Elizabeth Browning's sonnets the sweetest love-songs ever sung by a woman's voice. I walk with Tennyson in the shadow of his grief; I catch with him the heavenly whisperings that come to an ear made fine by sorrow; I pass

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with him into the serene radiance of a morning that has no night. In my need, I can turn for assurance, for comfort, for inspiration, to some word of Isaiah or Paul or Jesus,—a word born out of a great heart in some great moment, and grown more sacred, more fragrant, more instinct with life, from all the unnumbered souls that have uttered it again in their hours of anguish and victory.

The Indian sultan had but one Scheherezade: I have a thousand story-tellers. I need not Faust's magic to bid spirits to my service; —the greatest of human kind, the singers and the seers, will utter for me as often as I listen such words as send auroral lights pulsing through the heavens, and call out the day-star over the mountain-tops, and flush the east with sacred dawn.

We may say that the world is full of music, and that our education lies largely in learning to distinguish its tones. Even for the physical ear there is boundless provision. As I pause, amid the quiet of my room, I hear the soft crackle and *purr* of the wood fire on the hearth, I hear the ever-changing voice of the wind. Nature is always vocal. Even in these wintry days, she has her cawing crows and shrill-voiced jays and crooning snow-birds.

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Soon will come the song of the first bluebird! The human voice has marvellous power and range. Not alone that sweet soprano that is like the voice of a soul, or that tenor whose soaring note seems almost to take form like a bird and rise before your eyes. In homelier and every-day voices there are undertones of constancy, of pleading, of unspoken hunger, of love grown pure through trial, of unshadowed childish joy, of goodness ripened by a life's vicissitudes. To finer ears than ours, melodies would reveal themselves in voices that jar harshly on us. There is a music which the soul alone discerns: triumphal marches of the heroic will; dirges to which eternity alone can bring comfort; hearts blending like intertwined voices; deepest organ-notes in which the soul feels God himself; orchestral harmonies, in which nature with all its ordered majesty and humanity with all its burdens move together toward some divine consummation. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!"

But perhaps you tell me, my friend, that of all this music only some faint and far-off murmur reaches you. Either you have never learned to hear it, or, having sometimes heard and rejoiced in it, you are now so beset and weighed down by cares and failures and heavi-

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ness of spirit that no reviving note of joy or elation reaches you. Yet listen. One sound comes always to the ear that is open: it is the steady drum-beat of *duty*. No music in it, perhaps,—only a dry rubadub. Ah, but that steady beat marks the time for the whole orchestra of earth and heaven! It says to you: "Do your work,—do the duty nearest you!" Keep step to that drum-beat, and the dullest march is taking you home.

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—— SOLEMN before us,
Veiled, the dark portal,
Goal of all mortal: —
Stars silent rest o'er us,
Graves under us silent.

But heard are the voices,
Heard are the sages,
The worlds and the ages:
"Choose well, your choice is
Brief and yet endless.

"Here eyes do regard you
In eternity's stillness;
Here is all fullness,
Ye brave, to reward you;
Work, and despair not."

GOETHE, translated by CARLYLE.

THY voice is on the rolling air;
I hear thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair.

What art thou then? I cannot guess;
But though I seem in star and flower
To feel thee some diffusive power,
I do not therefore love thee less:

My love involves the love before;
My love is vaster passion now;
Though mixed with God and Nature thou,
I seem to love thee more and more.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
I have thee still, and I rejoice;
I prosper, circled with thy voice;
I shall not lose thee though I die.

TENNYSON.

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VIII.

IMMORTALITY.

I HAVE tried in these letters to show that the highest life rests on simple and sure foundations. I have appealed only to that which we can directly test in our own experience. There has been no reliance upon authority, which may be questioned; no dependence on argument, against which another argument may be set up. The way into goodness and strength and joy has been shown to lie in what nobody can question,—fidelity to known duty and openness of heart and mind to the world about us. Even the faith in God, nay, more than faith, a living, quickening sense of him,—has been based not upon any argument or authority, but on that reverent, receptive, loyal attitude of the whole nature, which we know beyond any question to be the best attitude. But now we come to speak of a subject which seems by its very nature to lie quite beyond any appeal to the certainties of personal experience. No one of us has for himself tasted life beyond death. Yet I want, in speaking

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of this subject, to keep on the same plane upon which we have been hitherto, of the truths to which we may have direct, personal access, not resting on some other person's affirmation, or on an argument which is very good until some other argument overthrows it.

There is one sure fact to begin with,— man's longing for immortality, your and my hunger for it. What are we going to do with that hunger? The first obvious course is to examine and weigh the reasons in support of the hope. Into the wide field of such argumentation, I am not going to enter now, save to make a single remark about it. I think neither the arguments for nor the arguments against the hope ever fully and finally satisfy the intellectual nature. After the strongest affirmation, the weightiest appeal to historic testimony, to the general belief of mankind, to the voice of the soul itself, the question returns, Are we sure of it? And, on the other hand, after the physicist's subtlest and strongest proof that our knowledge of spiritual existence is wholly bound up with our knowledge of the material body, still we know that he has not probed to the bottom the mystery of existence; still from beyond the sphere of our exact knowledge there break in upon our con-

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sciousness profound and mysterious intimations, hints as it were of mightier realities beyond. So the intellect wavers, and finds no certain and final answer.

Shall we, then, dig up by the roots this disquieting desire, never satisfied, yet never hushed, and throw it away? We cannot do it. In its power, it laughs at the attempt. Is it, we may ask ourselves, an ignoble and selfish desire? Selfish it often becomes. But so, too, does selfishness forever intrude into all our highest and best affections; yet we seek not to extirpate those affections, but to purify them from selfishness. The longing for immortality has no more intrinsic and necessary selfishness than patriotism or a mother's affection or the love of beauty. Like them, it may take narrow and unworthy forms. Like them, it may become supremely noble. It is not merely for ourselves that you and I, in our best moments, long for a better life beyond this earthly existence. We crave it for others, for those who here are unhappy, unsuccessful, undeveloped, mere rudiments or wrecks of men. That is not a selfish desire. As to ourselves even, for what part of us is it that we most desire continuance and growth? Not surely for the lower part of us. It is the love of truth, of

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goodness, of beauty, the love of other souls, that revolts at the idea of its own annihilation. When we lay our friend in the grave, it is that which was holiest in our union that rises and asserts itself in new power. His outward form, so dear to our sight,—that we can bear to part from. The merry-makings we had together, the pleasant talk, the good comradeship, we miss them sorely; yet these we can afford to relinquish. But the love that underlay these things, the sense of the beautiful soul we looked upon, the joy in his happiness rather than our own,—all of this is stronger now than ever. All of this blends with the feeling that what was dearest, best, most personal, self of self, is not extinct, but is more now than it ever was. Somehow, it has gone onward and upward. It is that which is lowest and least worthy in our love to which death comes as a finality. To that in it which is noblest, purest, most worthy to endure, death brings only a new life and consecration.

So, whatever else may be said about the hope of immortality, it cannot be justly said that it is a selfish hope. Rather, it is the natural companion and completion of that which is best and worthiest in us. Even should it be an uncertain hope, it is still worthy to be cherished and reverenced.

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By those who cherish it as a hope, or who more strongly hold it as a firm assurance, or in whom it blends as inspiration and radiance with the inner sources of moral energy,—by all these, two facts are to be kept in mind. A belief in immortality is not indispensable to sound and noble character. It may be that it belongs to the highest and completest type of character. The want of it in a person or a community may, in the progress of time, have a thwarting effect upon moral development. But in individual men and women there may be a dominance of high moral purpose, a devotion to noble and unselfish ends, a wide and effective sympathy, without this belief. And — as the other fact — there are individuals, religions, races, in which the strong belief in immortality yields no very noble fruit. Of all the peoples we know about, perhaps none had a more vivid belief in a future life than the ancient Egyptians and the mediæval Europeans. But the Jews, who, when they left Egypt, seem for a long time not to have looked for any but an earthly life, had a stronger and more fruitful morality than the nation from which they came out; and to-day, among the scientific class represented by Huxley and Tyndall, doubtful or disbelieving as to any futurity for man beyond

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earth, there are thousands whose lives are far more conscientious, orderly, and serviceable than the average knight or monk of the Middle Ages. Nay, we need not look so far as Egypt or mediæval Europe to find men who, looking with full confidence for a future heaven, certainly make this world none the more heavenly by their presence.

This twofold fact, that there are very good people who do not believe in immortality, and many people not at all good who do believe in it, ought constantly to warn us against making the belief of too much account as a standard of character, either for other people or ourselves. To heed that warning, to keep free from dogmatism and over-solicitude about the subject, and yet to cherish in our hearts the sacred hope,— that is a great task to set ourselves. A very practical task, is it not? Here, surely, we are on firm ground,— ground open to experience and consciousness,— that we are to reverence and cherish the *hope* of immortality, and at the same time are not to be over-hot about it, are not to sit in judgment on people who doubt or disbelieve.

The subject of immortality seems to set us over again one of life's great lessons, almost its greatest and certainly its hardest lesson,

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which is set us in earliest babyhood, and over and over again to our latest day,—the lesson of patience. Again and again, to our eager cries comes back life's answer, *Wait.* That seems at first so poor a thing to do,—so hard, so barren, so negative! But we find after a time that just this dreary business of waiting, when it is resolutely confronted and undertaken, is working the strongest stuff into the foundations of our characters. Patience is own sister to faith. The impulse to patiently wait and the impulse to trust are both the voice in the soul of that eternal power on which it is stayed. As to this hope of life beyond death, it would seem that a great discipline of patience, and at times even of discouragement, must be good for humanity. It is well that we should sometimes be sharply confronted by the question, If there be no hereafter, will you live worthily *now?* If any man longs for a hereafter, and is sorrowfully driven to give up hope of it, yet to the full measure of his knowledge and ability meets his present duty and performs his present service, is he not a hero? The sight of such a one almost moves us to think that a man is not worthy of immortality, unless he can, if need be, live without the expectation of it.

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Indeed, just this comes home to me strongly sometimes,—that we are none of us worthy to have our hope of immortality become a full and constant assurance. We are hardly strong enough to bear it. Think, if its full light shone always upon us, how impatient we should be, how unable to go on with these tasks and tolerate these present conditions! Indeed, it has often been shown plainly enough that a man or a people whose thoughts come to be centered on an existence beyond this is diverted from full and worthy discharge of present duty. It was so with ancient Egypt; it was so with mediæval Europe; it is so now with the Catholic Church, which, rather than expose its children to Protestant influences, to the peril of their future salvation, prefers even to let them grow up in dirt and ignorance and vice, to the forfeiture of any earthly salvation. *Now* and *here* God has placed us: with now and here is our present vital concern. Why should we ask or expect the clear revelation of a future heaven, if all about us lies an actual or possible heaven, unexplored and almost unentered? Why should I so strain my eyes to see the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem as to forget that right about me here is one of God's own days,—a day on which winter's splendor is softened by the first deli-

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cious breath of spring, and snowy earth and frozen river and white smoke-wreath and cloud and sky and sunshine blend in one sublime picture to which my dull eyes have hardly begun to open? What right have I to shut myself up to brood and long for a future communion of saints, if close about me here are saints whose goodness and whose wants are shut out from me in my self-absorbed ponderings?

It would seem that all our questions have a certain necessary order and mutual relation to one another. The question of the hereafter is a most real, most pressing one, to any thoughtful man. But he cannot get a satisfactory answer to it so long as he divorces it from the question of the *Here*. We talk of immortality; but there is a better phrase than that,— the word of Jesus, "eternal life." That implies not mere duration, but quality. It blends the present and the future in one. It sets before us a state into which we are called to enter now, and into which as we enter we find ourselves at home in our Father's house, beyond the power of doubt or fear.

Mere continuance of existence,— what is it? That bowlder yonder has existed for ages, a very eternity to the imagination; and it is only a bowlder after all. One hour of throbbing

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human life is worth more than its barren eternity. What is it to you and me whether we go on living, if life to us is made up of petty and ignoble thoughts and occupations? The real trouble with most of us is not the doubt whether we shall live hereafter, but the fact that as yet we have hardly begun to live at all. Are we drawing deep breaths of God's vital air? Are our muscles strung and steadied by high resolve? Are our senses windows through which the soul looks out upon a divine universe? Does the pulse of moral purpose beat steadily? Is the fiber of our lives made up of fidelity and sympathy? Is our personality the center of circles that widen out to those we love, to those who need us, to the whole human brotherhood, to God? Those are the questions to which it is our business to make the answer, *Yes*,—to hew out that answer in the solid rock of character.

Jesus found the Jews divided into two parties, one strenuous to assert immortality, the other to deny it. He did not identify himself with either party. He saw that neither the belief of the Pharisees nor the scepticism of the Sadducees bore any large fruit of right living. It looks from the records as if he did not say much about immortality. But he was most ear-

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nest in calling on men to *live.* Sometimes the call was spoken with pathos, because it found so little response: "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." Oftener it was uttered with joyfulness out of the fullness of his own experience. Sometimes its glad tones seem even playful in their expostulation. "Why are you forever thinking only about getting your living? Look at the sparrows. They do not reap, nor gather into barns. Why do you take such endless anxiety about your clothes? See the lilies,—they do not toil nor spin!" Yet, somehow, Jesus by his life and death gave an amazing impulse to the belief in immortality. His followers explained their belief by saying that he came back from the grave, and appeared in visible form to his disciples. But no disclosure to the senses, no apparition even of one risen from the dead, has of itself the power to kindle a great faith in the soul. The disciples did not believe because they saw the risen Jesus: they saw him because they believed. He had so inspired them with his own lofty trust, so penetrated them with a sense of some deathless quality in him, that, when he was taken from them, and outwardly all seemed lost, there sprang up in them a victorious and quenchless assurance. Faith born of love swept

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every faculty into its service, and imagination lent itself to express under bodily forms what the spirit felt,—Jesus lives!

When Paul recounts, as the ground of his faith, the successive appearances of the risen Christ,—to this disciple, then to that one, then to so many at once, finally to Paul himself,—he really gives us no adequate account of the source of his own sublime confidence in the very face of death. That confidence and calmness was inwrought with his idea of life itself. The only *life* which Paul recognized as of any account was holiness, love, joy, peace. A man who is filled and possessed by that spirit comes to have no fear of death or of anything that can happen. Paul's belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and anticipation of the bodily resurrection of the saints, was a mere outward garniture of this deeper faith, not its source or substance.

It would seem that the highest and holiest soul carries with it like an atmosphere a perfect serenity, a sense of present eternity, a presage of immortality. Something of this serenity and assurance passes subtly and mightily from the higher soul to those who come in contact with it and open themselves to its influence. Some such souls, in a degree, there are perhaps in

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every age and in every community. Such a soul, beyond any other we have known, was Jesus.

As toward the idea of immortality, there seem to be two things required of us. One is to give the utmost largeness and nobility to our present existence, seeking through true life to come to the sense of eternal life, and to be worthy of so high a destiny. The other is to keep ourselves, toward this as toward all great ideas and hopes, in an attitude of reverent humility and patient waiting.

The expression, "the loss of a soul," may well suggest a thought quite different from that of endless suffering,—the thought rather of a man's higher nature so squandered and wasted that nothing remains of it. Jesus speaks of a man who has bent his whole energies to getting wealth, planting always wider fields, building larger barns; a man careless of honor, tenderness, faith; a man who makes one think of some of our money-kings. At midnight comes to him the word, "Thou fool! this night *thy soul* shall be required of thee." We seem to hear the poor, shivering wretch make answer: "Lord, I have no soul! I lost it long ago." Yet how much of the time are

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we working on that very line, eagerly seeking "the world"; that is, wealth for ourselves, pleasure for ourselves, ease, comfort, things that perish in the using,—things that leave no enrichment; and, meantime, losing our *soul*, missing the disinterestedness, the fidelity, the pure affections, whose growth makes up and constitutes the soul. A real soul death can never harm. For it we may be absolutely fearless. But those who shall be found having no soul, having thrown it away or starved it, of them what shall we think? In them, too, let us trust the divine eye sees some germ that is worth preserving. Even for them we need not despair. But for ourselves there this is one thing to do, living or dying,—to make for the things that are of real account, to live in things eternal.

So of that relation where the question of the future comes more closely home to us than anywhere else, as to those whom we love better than ourselves. How many closely knit friends —comrade with comrade, lover with his betrothed, husband and wife, mother and child—ask, with intense questioning, Will death be the end of our love? and before that question perhaps feel themselves powerless. Powerless?

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You have a mighty power in the matter. You can work into your love the earthly or the eternal quality. Just so far as it is self-forgetting, as it has its exercise in things worthy to endure, as its bond grows nobler while the years go on, so far it takes hold on eternity. Give love its full nobility. Let it be to you not secluding, but enlarging; not shutting you up in a selfish paradise, but taking you always into wider, truer, tenderer companionship with other souls. Live together in the steady fidelities, in the noble emotions, for the great interests. Ensphere your love in humanity, in nature, in God. Guard it ceaselessly against that subtle self-seeking which values your friend not for himself, but for what he gives to you. Nothing is so completely beyond the power of death as a noble love. Parting can shatter only its outward shell. Under that strange touch, love in its inmost recesses kindles and glows with a diviner life. Whom of the living do we love as we love our dead? Whom else do we hold so sacredly and so surely? Not as a memory of a lost past,—nothing in our present is so real as they, and toward our unknown future we go with a great and solemn gladness, beckoned by their presence. Through them duty is

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most sacred to us, in them we are strong to labor and endure, and for their sake we learn to love all others. It is the sense of them mingling with all beauty that makes the earth glow to our eyes with the light that never was on sea or land. It is their love that becomes to us the surest pledge and deepest experience of the goodness of God.

Love slain by death? It does not come to its full stature till death's hand is laid upon it. Its bond is but half-tested till it spans the gulf between the seen and unseen worlds. Its service is incomplete till it has vanquished in our hearts the fear of the grave, and taught us how death is swallowed up in victory.

Carlyle has spoken the true word, first of the union of lives on earth: "Mystical, more than magical, is that communing of soul with soul, both looking heavenward. Here properly soul first speaks with soul; for only in looking heavenward, take it in what sense you may, not in looking earthward, does what we call union, mutual love, society, begin to be possible." It is the hearts that in such an atmosphere have grown together which can receive that other high word: "Is the lost friend still mysteriously here, even as we are here mysteriously, with God! — Know of a truth that

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only the timeshadows have perished or are perishable."

Love is wise beyond all other interpreters. "His eyes pierce the universe." He stands beside the awful portals through which life enters and disappears, and beside each he utters his smiling promise. The child comes a stranger out of the unknown. The signs and auguries with which nature surrounds its advent are of pain only. Helpless and forlorn it lies, an atom, a waif. But through the mother's eyes Love looking on it says, "Behold here something inexpressibly sacred, of promise unutterable." And that prophecy is made good, when from that frail germ emerges and ripens the sublimest thing we know,—a man.

At his journey's end, the traveler passes through another portal, out into the unknown as from the unknown he came. Again nature vouchsafes no omens save those of weakness and distress. And again beside the gateway stands Love,—the love that is nearest and dearest, and on whom the suffering heaviest falls,—silent now, with finger on the lips, but his eyes radiant with prophecy of a good too great for speech.

Well may we wait in patience for that part of Death's meaning which on earth remains un-

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told. What we can understand of his message is enough.

> "All Hope, all Memory,
> Have their deep springs in me;
> And Love, that else might fade,
> By me immortal made,
> Spurns at the grave, leaps to the welcoming skies,
> And burns a steadfast star to steadfast eyes."

The form and manner of a future existence lies wholly beyond our power to imagine. Yet, thinking of it as a higher state than this, we inevitably associate with it the idea of that which we call personality. All of the best that we here experience or think or imagine exists with personality as its center. The greatest realities are such as truth, duty, freedom, joy, love, sacrifice; and these all have significance only as the conscious *I* exists. The immortality to which virtue aspires, for which love hopes, in which faith trusts, is the continuance and expansion of that *I* to which virtue and love and faith belong. But what change, what enlargement, what closer ensphering with other lives, with nature, and with God, may belong to that state, passes all our guessing. Yet this we feel, that it is as the *I* learns to blend with other existence,—itself not thereby annihilated, but growing intenser and fuller,—being

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glad with another's joy and sad with another's sorrow, and coming by degrees into living union with the great life of humanity and nature and God,—then it is that the soul seems like a young bird to be practising its wings and making ready for flight when the earthly nest can no longer suffice it.

Toward all that is yet unanswered, our right attitude is one of reverent expectation. We are prone to hurry, and God is never in a hurry. What we cannot learn to-day we are apt to think we shall never know. But to the rightly ordered soul, each year, each day, brings its new lesson or its deeper confirmation of the old lesson. This also is true: the part assigned to us is to do, to act, to strive; yet the best things are not directly won by our striving, but come to us as given. Thus, it is useless to demand affection: the thing for us to do is to *bestow* affection, to serve, to be a friend to others, and, lo! by and by friends come to us. So, the beauty of nature, the men and women we reverence, the unseen guiding that shapes our destinies to higher issues than we foresaw,—none of these things did we create for ourselves; God gave them to us. So is it with the sense of eternal life. While we eagerly question about it, importu-

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nately demand it, it baffles and eludes us. But as we slowly subdue our lives to order and harmony, we come to feel a divine support and inspiration. We are not of the dust: we are children of God. Then through all our strenuous activities there breathe the airs of eternal peace. We cease to be disquieted about the future. The sense of our immortality blends perhaps almost unconsciously with the earthly harmonies, at times hardly heard in distinction from them.

"Yet, like some sweet beguiling melody,
So sweet we know not we are listening to it,
Thou, the meanwhile, wast blending with my thought,
Yea, with my life, and life's own secret joy."

In its most vivid consciousness, it belongs to the great reserve forces of our nature. Sometimes it is under the shock of emergency that it springs to full life, radiant, all-conquering. Then,— when we are emptied of our strength and must lie passive, or when the last effort to reclaim our wanderer has failed, or when the grave closes over the form in which seemed incarnated all our happiness,— then sometimes some inwrought, latent faculty of the soul flashes under a divine touch into a light wherein God's eternity is revealed encom-

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passing us. Or it may be in the highest and purest moments of our joy that we feel ourselves enwrapped and blent with the imperishable. When love is at its fullest, when the vision of truth shines clearest, in the hours when life is most significant, most precious, we come into a great calm and peace. We know that good is at the heart of all. And as the memory of those high moments is retained as our law and inspiration through all less exalted moods, it approves itself worthy by working into the fiber of character a strain of blended constancy and hope, steadfast, serene, invincible.

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NOT with scarfs or perfumed gloves
Do these celebrate their loves;
Not by jewels, feasts, and savors,
Not by ribbons or by favors,
But by the sun-spark on the sea,
And the cloud-shadow on the lea,
The soothing lapse of morn to mirk,
And the cheerful round of work.
Their cords of love so public are
They intertwine the farthest star;
The throbbing sea, the quaking earth,
Yield sympathy and signs of mirth;
Is none so high, so mean is none,
But feels and seals this union.

EMERSON.

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IX.

OUR FATHER'S HOUSE.

"In my Father's house are many mansions." So said Jesus, and the word has been treasured by his followers as a very dear one. Yet they have taken it in a different and narrower sense than that in which we may well believe he intended it. As most people read the words, "my Father's house" means some place beyond this life, and the saying of Jesus was simply a promise of a future heaven. But such an interpretation does not accord with his spirit. He had found this earth and this earthly life to be full of an inexpressible beauty and sacredness. He had given a willing service to the highest and best he knew, and had found flowing in upon him a peace and joy so great that he accepted them as the true interpreters of the meaning of the universe. As the end of the scene drew near, he could trust himself fearlessly to the divine power which here he had found so trustworthy and so beneficent. But his disciples shrank with dread from that unknown realm. They had learned from their Master something

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of the blessed possibilities of this world, but — that mysterious realm beyond! As he passed into it, would he not be wholly lost? But, as if with a smile of perfect trust, he says to them: "Fear not! In my Father's house are many rooms. That life is his as well as this. I am only going into the next room a little before you, as if to make it ready and be there to welcome you."

Something like this we may imagine was the meaning of Jesus. Such certainly seems to accord with our highest and truest way of looking at things. And I take that phrase of his, "my Father's house," or "our Father's house," — for he sometimes said "my" and sometimes "our" Father, as if now with the gladness of personal appropriation, and now again with an inclusion of all human souls in the same near relation to God, — I take that word, "our Father's house," as the expression not merely of consolation and hope in view of a future heaven, but also of free-hearted gladness in this present world, our Father's home and ours.

What other place has such associations of pleasure and of real liberty as an old family home! It all belongs, in the best sense, to the brood of children who grow up there. For

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them the father is plying his work. In the midst of them lives the mother, the servant of all, giving them the best of herself, nay, the whole of herself, every day and hour. There are the nursery and the playroom, the schoolroom perhaps, the library with its books, the place where all gather about the evening fire, the kitchen with its busy work, the cellar with its stores, and the garret with its old-time treasures which the children delight to ransack on a rainy day. There are the various chambers which, as years go on, grow populous with sacred memories of bridal and birth and burial. An entire little community is grouped in and about the walls,—father and mother; children and, after a time, children's children, who come back eager and happy visitors to "grandfather's"; faithful servants who become true members of the family; household pets, dogs and cats and birds, horse and cow; trees and garden-beds and flowers that seem almost to give back the affection that invests them. And it all belongs to the children! Theirs is the love which planted the home, theirs the labor which has built it up and enriched it. To them is given the forethought which plans and the tenderness which caresses. Theirs is the almost unconscious example of father and mother,

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the ceaseless influence of character. Theirs is the firm and gentle law which trains to obedience and unselfishness. How sheltered they are, how fearless and how happy!

Even so, but with a higher courage, a profounder trust, a fuller happiness, ought you and I, my friend, to walk this earthly life. Why are we so backward in taking our birthright of gladness? Why, above all, should those who have learned life's grandest lesson, duty, be so slow to learn its lesson of happiness? If one is living basely and selfishly, there exists for him nothing worthy to be called happiness. If one has bound his life to the pursuit of some lower thing, wealth or material success; or if one is simply drifting like a chip in the stream, without purpose of any kind,—of course to such a one life must be devoid of its finest relish. But say that one accepts conscience and sympathy and aspiration as his guides, and is doing his best to make true and full use of every day,—it is not for such a one to live like a drudge. Open your eyes, open your heart! Taste and see how full and sweet a draught is offered to you.

I am writing on a morning when after a week of cloudy weather the sun shines brilliantly out. The sight is enough to pour a

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flood of gladness into any heart that will open to take it in. The clouds are battling still for the mastery; between their hurrying squadrons, the sky smiles down out of its far depths; the March wind sings its reveille. The gladness of the coming spring calls at every man's door, "Be glad with me!" Who will listen long enough to let that exquisite strain weave its melody like a golden thread among the tissues of work and thought that make up his day?

To the open and generous heart, the joy of nature should be contagious. Have I troubles, worries, absorbing cares? Yet suppose through it all I had the sight of a friend who was full of a great and noble happiness: should not a gleam of his happiness be reflected on me? Shakespeare makes Orlando say, "Oh, how bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another man's eyes!" But one should cultivate the very reverse of that feeling, and learn to rejoice in another's happiness as if it were his own. A woman who had known heavy sorrow once said to me, "When my own life was saddest, the sight of other people's happiness always gave me pleasure." To keep sympathy like that is to have a share in all the joys of humanity. He who looks with such

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eyes has part in the bliss of happy lovers, in the mother's fullness of heart as she caresses her baby, in the glow with which the ardent workman achieves his task. Yes, and in the gladness of all living things,— the play of kittens, the frolic of yonder dogs chasing each other round and round, the ecstasy of the horse turned loose in pasture after a long season under harness. The majestic and infinite joys of nature may pour themselves into his spirit,— the splendors of her sunrises and midnights, the fresh green leaves creeping now under the brown grass, the great tide of incoming life, whose scouts and advance guards are stealing in upon us, and sometimes, on a morning like this, make a sudden, swift rush, as if to carry winter's citadel by storm.

"In our Father's house are many rooms." Glance into one or two of the rooms whose doors stand open and inviting. Walk along the streets of this town, looking only at those distant relatives of man, his far-away cousins of the animal world. See, in the midst of the street, the great tame pigeons. The glimmer of the rainbow is on their necks. They have a ripe and matronly beauty; there is a kind of Quaker sedateness in their garb of brown and drab, and in their decorous bearing, as

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if they were quite unconscious of their necklaces of emerald and ruby, their shining eyes, and the trim, red-stockinged feet, tripping nimbly along. They are as beautiful as the pigeons that crowd together every noon on St. Mark's piazza, and add a new glow of color and life to the splendor of queenly Venice. Along with the pigeons flock the noisy sparrows. I frankly own I never found much good in them (perhaps they say the same of me); but someone, who was too wise to despise them, watched a flock feeding in the street the other day, and noted this: whenever a woman came near them on the walk, they did not stir for her; when a man passed by, they hopped a little distance off; but if a boy came along, they at once took flight! So even sparrows become interesting, if one watches them wisely. Here, curled up before a shop-window, lies a cat, the image of perfect comfort. There seems to be hardly a creature that has such a genius for comfort as the cat. Yesterday, on a dreary March day, I saw in the fields an old tabby ensconced on the top rail of a fence, head and paws and tail deftly tucked together, and from the half-shut eyes came a gleam of luxurious repose. Cats are often to be seen with those half-shut eyes. They seem to have the

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art of prolonging indefinitely that blissful state between waking and sleeping — as it were, just enough awake to know one is asleep — which we taste only in brief snatches. Put a cat in a strange room, and in the briefest possible time she discovers and occupies the softest and warmest place. Or let her, in a strange place, be suddenly attacked by a dog, and by the swiftest instinct she goes straight to the safest spot within reach, — up the nearest tree, or behind some effective barricade. No Napoleon or Wellington had ever so quick an eye for the strongest military position. The cat is a creature of luxury, of the chase and of war; a true savage, with such perfect grace as no human savage ever possessed, and such an equipment of agile muscle as no human frame is endowed with. In the midst of our homes the cat remains a splendid barbarian, recalling the fierce beauty of the lion and tiger, suggesting the jungle and the Himalayas. I find a cat all the better companion at times for its want of conscience and human emotion. The beautiful, luxurious, life-enjoying animal brings a relief from the stress and strain of creatures with souls. A dog comes near enough to man to have sometimes a touch of human pathos. There is often an appealing look in a dog's

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eyes, that is enough to make one fancy he is going to develop into a man some day, and begins to be conscious of some higher destiny stirring within him. What companionship there is in a good dog! There is to me something attractive in almost any dog, except a Spitz. I draw the line at Spitzes. Dogs, as a class, have a large capacity for friendship. My own dog, if he could count (perhaps he can), might reckon up, first, me, his master, chief in his affections, then, perhaps half a dozen friends, — human friends, I mean, — and two or three times as many with whom he is on terms of good-natured acquaintance. About his relations with his own kind I cannot speak so confidently, but I think he has no real intimacies with other dogs. A dog has the fine quality of preferring the company of his superiors to that of his equals or inferiors: he consorts with men in preference to his own race. With dogs and cats, and, indeed, all the inferior tribes, we can practise a fine simplicity and friendliness of manners, quite beyond what exists among ourselves. I can greet a perfectly strange dog with a pat, and he accepts it graciously, or perhaps answers with a friendly wag and a responsive glance out of his honest brown eyes. Perhaps he even makes the first advance, coming

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up to me with an inquiring sniff. How much a dog finds out through his sense of smell I suppose is known only to his Creator. The nose seems to be to a dog almost as much as the eye is to a man. Perhaps he judges character by it. It may be that just as we say, "I like the look of that man," so a dog says to himself or his fellow, "I like the smell of that man." I am sometimes afraid that I am more accessible to caninity than to humanity. I like a man when he proves himself on acquaintance a good fellow, but I am attracted to a dog as soon as I see him. There are plenty of dog-lovers who will understand the feeling. The dog-loving disposition is of itself no small bond between those who share it, bringing them at once into a sort of Masonic relationship with each other. So, too, there is the love of horses,—one of the great passions of humanity. There are plenty of men to whom horses are as full of fascination as pictures to an artist or stocks to a Wall Street broker. Almost every domestic animal has its devotees and special friends. The canary has its lovers. Even gold-fishes find people who treasure them. And every such taste and affection enlarges by just so much one's world. It is a key that opens to us another room in our Father's house.

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The old Greek story tells how, after the too curious Pandora had opened the mysterious box whence straightway flew out all the troubles that have since afflicted mankind, last of all flew out the fairy Hope, and remains a constant comforter. I think that Hawthorne, who has retold the story in his charming way in the children's *Wonder Book*, might, if he had chosen, have given to older hearers another version. In this it should be set forth that once, when a cloud of woes were let loose upon mankind, there was sent also as alleviation the good spirit of *Laughter*. I do not know that any poet has yet exalted Laughter to the dignity of an angel or even of a fairy. Like most other angels, he does his work and claims no credit. The sense of humor, the power to see and feel the ludicrous side of things, the faculty which tastes a joke with as positive and keen a relish as the palate tastes a flavor or the eye drinks in a splendid color,— what an alleviation, what a blessing it is! The sense of humor is the oil of life's engine. Without it, the machinery creaks and groans. No lot is so hard, no aspect of things is so grim, but it relaxes before a hearty laugh. My grandfather used to say that wit was almost a kind of goodness. He had both goodness and wit himself,

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and I wonder how he could have borne the burden his religion laid on him but for the easement given him by his power to laugh. He was a Puritan minister of the old stamp, holding with firm conviction that tremendous Calvinistic view of mankind's destiny, which, if it were true, might well banish every smile from human faces. Nature herself always bore witness in men's hearts against the dogmas of a ruined race and an endless perdition. For there remained in them, indestructible, the power to laugh! like a flag of cheer flying through all the black fogs of fear and phantasm, an unquenchable signal that the universe is God's after all.

My grandfather's estimate of wit as ranking next to virtue reminds me of a saying of a little negro boy who lived with him, and whose African jollity broke out one day in the exclamation, "O Mr. Fiske! I think a kettle-drum is the finest thing in the world!" "*What?*" said the austere minister, amazed. "Oh," said the corrected boy quickly, "I mean *except religion*, of course!"

It is a shallow mistake to suppose that humor has its sources near the surface, and is a sort of frivolity, to be tolerated in lighter moments, but out of place among serious realities,

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and a sort of sacrilege if brought among holy things. It strikes its roots deep down. The springs of laughter and of tears lie not very far apart. When people are afraid of laughter in church, it is a bad sign for the church. It shows that people lay aside some part of their natural selves when they enter there. It is one of the indications that the ordinary conception of religion is shrunken, starched, conventionalized. A popular orator wishing to move his audience upon any of the other great interests of life; John Bright leading the common people of England in a forward movement for liberty and justice; Abraham Lincoln rallying the common people of America to resist the extension of slavery,— never imagined that the weapon of humor was too undignified for such a purpose. What a power lay in Lincoln's humor! How in those four years, when he bore as heavy a load as ever was laid on human shoulders, his worn, heroic spirit would rest and clear itself with a droll story and a laugh! In that laughter he laid his great frame on the homely lap of mother earth, and rose up strong again. His humor abode with him like a grotesque, never-failing friend. At its strange presence solemn enthusiasts and decorous statesmen stared in per-

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plexity: they found no authority in their codes and traditions for such an outlandish guest. But, all the same, Lincoln told stories and laughed. He challenged the stately Sumner to "measure backs" with him, and keenly relished the bewilderment with which the Massachusetts statesman went through the operation. He laughed, and eased his heart, which else would have broken of the weight laid on it. At a crisis of the war, he called his cabinet together, none of them knew for what. When they were all assembled, he took down Artemus Ward's book, and read them page after page. No doubt he had the laughter mostly to himself. Fancy the courtly Seward and sedate Chase and leonine Stanton listening to that strange reading! At last, he laid down the book and became sober. He told them that he had come to a momentous decision; that as to its substance he asked no advice, for his mind was made up; but their comments and suggestions he would gladly hear. Then — he read to them the emancipation proclamation!

Brave hearts can laugh as the full river sparkles. It is the low tide that leaves bare the muddy flats,— no smiles in them! When the brimming flood comes in, all its wavelets answer back the sun with "immeasurable

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laughter." What gratitude we owe the men who by happy inspiration and skill have wrought imperishable laughter into books! We talk of the wonder of the phonograph, but how mere a trifle is the preservation of a mechanical sound compared to that art by which Shakespeare's laughter at the Falstaff he created is echoed on from age to age, coming as fresh and joyful from our lungs as it came from his! It is laughter that is the key-note to one of the few greatest works of man's imagination, the matchless *Don Quixote*. A brave soul was Cervantes. The story of his life, as Lockhart briefly tells it, is the best possible preface to that always-charming romance. He suffered many things,—hardship, wounds, captivity,—and bore them gallantly, resolute, patient, helpful to comrades, inwardly victorious. And as the outcome of all, and his legacy to us, he left not a preachment nor a poem, but a story over whose delicious drollery we laugh again and again, and are never weary. At every page it wins our love for chivalry of soul, even when bereft of common-sense. The knight and Sancho, what friends of ours they become! What dull hours they have brightened, what cheerfulness they impart, and into what good accord they bring us with human life,

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blundering business though it be, yet lit up with sweet gleams of valor and tenderness!

Lofty examples these, but it is not with the lofty that Laughter makes his favorite home. He delights in the company of the humble, and gives to many a lowly worker a constant relish and salt to the daily food. He makes to the Irish peasant compensation for many a hardship. Even the dark cloud of slavery shows its silver lining in the charming drollery of the legends of "Brer Rabbit" and his friends, as Uncle Remus tells them to the little boy. Laughter is wont to take wing for a little when first the graver responsibilities begin to be felt. The freedman brings out of his bondage a lessened jollity, while in his voice there lingers a pathos inwrought by centuries of suffering. The Irishman takes on an almost grim sobriety while his transformation into an American is going on. "There is a time to laugh," said the wise man, and it is not the time of struggle and transition. But as we come to our full selves and a large manhood, there come freedom and joyfulness of spirit. Why should we not laugh and be glad? We are in our Father's house.

"Yet," says one, "life is, after all, a serious business, and much sadness must come into

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it." True enough. And where is the earthly father's house into which sadness does not sometimes come? The old family mansion has gained part of its dearness from times of sore trouble. There were those nights when rest was sharply broken by the croupy whistle in the baby's breathing, and the days of fear that followed, perhaps the days of loneliness. There was the time when the mother lay dangerously ill, and the children moved about hushed and awe-stricken; there were the moments of dread suspense when waiting for the word of the consulting doctors, the alternations of hope and fear; perhaps, at last, the rainbow in the clouds, — recovery, thanksgiving too full for words; perhaps death, and the wrestle of submission with heart-break. How these things have entered into the sacredness of the old house! How they have blent with its deepest lessons, its most solemn blessings! A house hardly takes on the full character of a home until it has been baptized in successive experiences of joy and sorrow. Newly built, newly furnished, it is a shelter for the body, as good as just such another house somewhere else, and no better; but within it, as time passes, there goes on the sacred drama of human life, until the house itself seems struck through with color and

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warmth. Hearts are drawn together there till two lives blend in one. Daily work, daily discipline, the family affections, music, mirth, the thousand interests of the household, go on in the house. Within its walls that divine miracle, the beginning of a human life, moves its sacred course. Fatherhood and motherhood hallow the home. The children grow up in it. And, of all the voices with which life speaks in that shrine, none are more sacred than those which breathe in the chamber of sickness, speaking to the sufferer of patience, and the grandest because the hardest heroism; speaking to the others of ministry, tenderness, love, which finds in the beloved one's need its supreme opportunity. No voice is more sacred than that which speaks from the chamber of death, and gives to love a new and mystic consecration, uniting it through sorrow with God and eternity.

Into every human life sooner or later comes Trouble. Mysterious guest! Always his face is veiled. His grasp wrings our hand, sometimes as if it would crush flesh and bone. Often he tarries long under our roof. Always with his presence a choice is silently offered to us. He brings two gifts, and we choose for ourselves one or the other. Often we hardly

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know we are making the choice; never, perhaps, do we know its full significance. The one gift is a blessing, and the other is a curse. Our veiled and terrible guest brings for us, if we will accept it, the boon of fortitude, patience, self-control, wisdom, sympathy, faith. If we reject that, then we find in our hands the other gift,— cowardice, weakness, isolation, despair.

If your trouble seems to have in it no other possibility of good, at least set yourself to bear it like a man. Let none of its weight come on other shoulders. Try to carry it so that no one shall even see it. Though your heart be sad within, let cheer go out from you to others. Meet them with a kindly presence, considerate words, helpful acts. What if Adversity showers her blows on you! To meet such blows is the very proof of your manhood. Does the soldier shrink when the shots fly about him? That is the very time he has trained himself for, the proof of his soldiership, his supreme opportunity. If the storm is too sharp for exultant courage, yet silently and steadfastly endure! If your sorrow seems to shut you up in loneliness, lay this well to heart,— its true and final office is the very opposite of that. It is meant to bring you into wider and closer

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union with other lives. Never let it make you forgetful of others or unsensitive to them. The heart has its own times of sacred seclusion, but from them it should issue forth with a new tenderness, a larger helpfulness. It is part of the blessed discipline of family life that within its circle we instinctively and spontaneously share each other's sorrows as well as joys. When we learn to do the like in that larger family in which every man is a brother, then we have mastered the great secret of life.

The father's house,—the home which the father and mother make,—it is the happiest and freest place in the world, and its freedom and happiness grow out of the root of obedience to the supreme laws. The home has its basis in unselfishness and purity. With us, it is the mother more than the father who makes the home. As I look at the different conditions in which people are set to work out their lives, and the results that issue from them, it seems to me that, speaking broadly of classes, the lot which has the finest possibilities of character is the mother's. The woman who has rightly and worthily brought a family of boys and girls up to manhood and womanhood, and met all the experiences incidental to such a process, is apt to take on a certain ripeness and

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sweetness which is seldom acquired under any other conditions. The mother-quality is almost the divinest thing in human nature. Of that quality no monopoly belongs to mothers or to women, yet it is the external lot of motherhood that especially develops and educates it. And the essence of motherhood is sacrifice. It is that finest sacrifice which is done willingly, joyfully even, becoming a second nature, and half-unconscious of itself. Day by day, hour by hour, the mother gives herself to her children, labors for them, thinks for them, holds her own thoughts in check while she enters into their childish thoughts and ways, puts her care, her insight, her imagination, all she has, at the service of those who in development are inferior to her, and who will perhaps in no way make full repayment to her. So she furnishes the perpetual type and example of the highest and worthiest disposition of man toward his kind. The father, too, ennobles his daily labor by doing it for his children's sake, and with them in his heart. The boys and girls as they grow up together from babyhood learn respect for each other's rights and interests and feelings. There is no finer school of unselfishness than the home where brothers and sisters are by their mother taught, and by

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all their play and intercourse with each other trained, to make regard for others give the law to life.

It is the family home that is the shrine of purity, the source and spring whence its influence goes forth to keep the community sound and sweet. In the reaction from the debasement that was the blight of the splendid ancient world, men tried the experiment of solitude and celibacy as the escape from sensuality,—tried it for hundreds of years, with terrible earnestness, and with a result of bitter failure. Then they came back to be taught of nature and of God that in the pure love of husband and wife lies man's highest state. The worship of the Virgin Mother had its day and did its service. It never spoke quite the true word of God, who from the beginning set wifehood as the portal of motherhood, itself not less sacred and pure. We know now that not the cell, but the home, is the true temple of purity, and in that temple woman is the priestess. A true woman carries inseparable from herself an atmosphere which inspires a sort of reverence. To many a young man, the thought of his mother or his sister is the strongest guard. For many and many a man, when life's most precious gift comes to him in the love of a

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wife, there dawns on him in the perception of her womanly character the vision of a purity such as he has not known before, august, sacred, the inspiration of a higher life in him.

Purity and unselfishness its corner-stones, love its law, freedom its atmosphere,— that the father's house should be, that each one of us may set as the ideal toward which he will labor to shape his own little world. So doing, he shall find this whole earth homelike and divine.

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WILT thou not ope thy heart to know
What rainbows teach, and sunsets show?
Verdict which accumulates
From lengthening scroll of human fates,
Voice of earth to earth returned,
Prayers of saints that inly burned,—
Saying, *What is excellent,*
As God lives, is permanent:
Hearts are dust, hearts' loves remain,
Heart's love will meet thee again.
Revere the Maker; fetch thine eye
Up to his style, and manners of the sky.
Not of adamant and gold
Built he heaven stark and cold:
No, but a nest of bending reeds,
Flowering grass, and scented weeds;
Or like a traveler's fleeing tent,
Or bow above the tempest bent;
Built of tears and sacred flames,
And virtue reaching to its aims;
Built of furtherance and pursuing,
Not of spent deeds, but of doing.
Silent rushes the swift Lord
Through ruined systems still restored;
Broad-sowing, bleak and void to bless,
Plants with worlds the wilderness;
Waters with tears of ancient sorrow
Apples of Eden, ripe to-morrow.
House and tenant go to ground,
Lost in God, in Godhead found.

EMERSON.

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X.

THE PERSONAL REVELATION.

THE time has come when I must bring this series of letters to a close. This present ending brings me a sense of parting company with some whom I have helped, and been helped in turn by the knowledge that my words found lodgement and response in them. How strangely one is stirred by the sense of a single soul fighting its battle, bearing its burden, winning its victory! A company of such,—quite unknown for the most part to each other and to the man who is talking to them,—that is a moving and solemn thought. A little fraction of the great army of souls, a scattered group, here by the Connecticut, of that family of many millions, in all of whom dimly or intensely is working a like struggle between the lower and the higher powers. How sacred a thing is this great human fellowship! Here is the "communion of saints," the working together, often unconscious and unseen, of all loyal-hearted men and women in the cause of duty and right and love. Here is that still ampler

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and more mysterious communion, the fellowship of *all souls*,— the disloyal, the apathetic, the wayward, bound inextricably in with the true and loving; no salvation for any of us, unless these our brothers be also saved! This thought of the subtle interlinking of all lives comes home to me as I think how these very words I am penning now will be read by thousands whom I shall never see. If anything in them touches in you who read any sense of aspiration, of evil to be conquered, of strength and peace to be won,— remember that others, too, feel the like. These experiences of moral contest are common to all who are really living. Remember, too, that whatever you lose or gain is lost or won not for yourself alone. By sure divine law, it works itself out on those who are near you, often when you least guess it touching them for good or for evil. We cannot live to ourselves or die to ourselves.

I would gladly say, if I could, some last word of clear light, strong impulse, deep comfort, to those who have listened to me. There is one word I especially long to say, yet cannot say it. It is that word for which the heart most deeply longs. It is the word which no one can really speak to the heart except God himself. And his way of speaking it is through a whole

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course of experiences, coming one after another into the life, and in no two lives the same. But the ear that will listen may always at last get its full meaning. Sometimes it is a long time, even with our best listening, before we so much as guess what is being said to us. Sometimes its meaning breaks on us in an instant, so clear, so sweet, so heart-filling, that heaven and earth become new before our eyes. Then after a little the sense grows dim: we live by memory rather than by present consciousness of it, till after a time the thrilling tone speaks again. And so, little by little, we get its deep assurance inwrought into the fiber of our lives, so that we can well forego the rapture and the ecstasy. To some most true and faithful lives, this divine word never comes with any rapture and ecstasy at all, but only like "daily bread," — a simple, quiet faith, arming the soul for duty, and keeping it unshaken before all danger.

And what is this one divine word? It is the assurance of a God on whom the soul may rest. It is the sense of safety. It is that faith, that perfect love, which casts out fear. It is the feeling that man is not alone,— that his human relationships, most abundant and tender though they are, are not his only relationships,— that

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he is in very truth the child of the Highest, God's child in time and eternity. That is the one word that hearts are longing for. To get that word, men shut their eyes to glaring errors in old systems of belief, and cling passionately to the creed which in some form or other declares, "Thou art the child of God." All the flood of new knowledge which science is pouring in, all the brilliant philosophies which with their audacity and novelty delight their votaries, speedily fail to fill the deep heart of man while they leave that word unsaid. And this is one of the tragedies of our time,—the doubt which haunts and tortures so many, "Is there a God, and is man his child?"

It may be that you who read this have been haunted by that doubt, and even now look eagerly for some word to satisfy it. Ah, that is a word which only God can speak, and in his own way! Not in sudden rapture, most likely, not in swift response to your importunate prayer, but an answer worked out deep and sure, as you meet with loyal will and reverent heart the experiences of the changing years. The teachers in God's great school are many. Joy and sorrow, love and loss, daily work, household tenderness, health, sickness, strength, helplessness,—one by one they come, solemn

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figures, some with radiant faces, some veiled and shrouded. Each speaks its word of command: "Be glad," "Be patient," "Be faithful," "Strive," "Lie still and wait." Often we break in upon the lesson with an importunate demand, "Show me the end." But each teacher, grave and tender, says only, "Do this that I bid thee."

The full answer may be a long time in coming. And yet, all the time, God is so near! *For the present want*, we may always find him sufficient.

For what is it, my friend, that you most need at this present moment? Ask yourself that, and then ask yourself soberly if it is not within your reach. There are a thousand things that you think would give you pleasure, and that you cannot command. But take a nobler standpoint for viewing your life than that of enjoyment. Say to yourself, "Life is not pleasure, but service,—it is not a holiday, but a campaign: what are my marching orders for today?" You will hardly fail to find them plainly written, in some duty close at hand. Or take this view of it, "I am here not for myself alone, but for others: what kind or helpful act can I do?" Surely you need not look far to find one. In such ways one may always find *light for the*

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next step,— the first thing a human being needs. And then there will be strength to take that step. Light for the hour, strength for the hour, — in these you have what you want most. Out of the realm beyond your own consciousness they came to you: you may well say, "These are God's gifts to me!" Or, if you cannot even say that, still manfully take the step, do the duty, render the kindness,— that is the great thing, not what words you use about it. To me there is ever-fresh meaning in that which Jesus put as the first *personal* aspiration, after the great desire that God's kingdom come and his will be done,— "Give us this day our daily bread." The daily bread,— light on the near path, strength for the near duty! And how free and bountiful it comes to us,— bountiful and free as the sunshine, and shut out by no clouds of April!

For the present want, I said, we may always find God sufficient. Well can I imagine the various straits and difficulties of those to whom such words may seem almost too large a promise to be trusted. And what key will unlock your difficulties I cannot tell. To each life come its own perplexities, into which no stranger can enter, from which even the nearest and best beloved is sometimes shut out.

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But God is always there. The token of his presence is a right which you are to choose rather than a wrong, a resource out of which your want is somehow met, a higher Will which, when you reverently accept it, you find to be not a cruel destiny but a Father's providence. It may be that you are enmeshed in an evil habit, grown strong by indulgence, against which now you struggle in fear of never getting free. That is a fearful slavery, a bitter warfare! Those chains you are trying to shake off are part of the awful sanction of the moral law: they are the dire penalty that warns him who is treading the first easy downward steps. How, you cry, shall I escape? Perhaps self-condemnation lays on you a crushing weight. You have forfeited the rights that belong to innocence and purity. How can you ever hope to regain them? Be sure of this, my friend, there is always forgiveness for him who seeks it; there is always hope for him who refuses to despair; there is always recovery for him who abhors his sin! You look on the company of pure and sweet-lived men and women, and feel shut off from them as if they were in heaven and you in hell. Know this,—the purest and sweetest of them all, did they know your miserable estate and your longing to escape from it,

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would say to you, *My brother,*— would take you by the hand, would leave behind them all pleasantness and ease of life if by coming to your side they might help you slowly upward. And that disposition which is in them is but a manifestation of the God whose children they are, and whose forgiving and restoring love offers itself to you, and will work with you, so that every effort for self-recovery shall have his power behind it, as the single wave is backed by the incoming tide.

Or it may be that sorrow encompasses you, some irreparable loss, some light gone out of your life that can never be rekindled, and you sit in darkness. It is those hours, I think, above all others, in which God comes close to the soul. Joy may be blessed; health and good cheer and all innocent delight may bring the heart into true and close accord with the divine universe; the happiness of human love may be a pure sacrament. But it is when some part of one's very life, that larger and better life made up of those we love, is taken away into the unseen, that eternity itself stands beside us and speaks its word. Will you listen to the word? You are very sorrowful, perhaps you feel very helpless. But you are not helpless: rather, this is for you the critical, decisive

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time. The higher and lower voices that are wont continually to call on you to choose between them, both are speaking now. One says: "Think of all you have lost. Dwell on all vanished delights, never, never to return, and clasp grief to your heart. Let your sorrow enfold you from all the world beside. Shroud form and heart in black. Pay to your lost one the tribute of perpetual heartbreak. I am love who bid you do this." It is not love, it is *self!* the lower, poorer self. Another voice is speaking: "Dear was thy friend, dearer be he now than ever! This sorrow of thine lays not its heavy hand on him; for that, thank God! Brave was he, and true and tender. Ever for his sake be thou the braver, truer, tenderer! Thou hast tasted love, and known it to be divine above all else. Live henceforth to spread love's reign wherever thou goest. That friend of thine, he lives and is forever thine. That in him which lay below face and voice, that sacred unspeakable *soul* in him which thou didst reverently worship, and to which thy very heart did cleave,—that perishes not; rises rather and blends, thou knowest not how, with all beauty and greatness, with God and eternity. This universe, sacred and dear to thee because it enshrined that soul, let it be to thee now more

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dear and sacred. Go forth, to work, to serve, to love! This little life passes quickly away. Its shadows and sorrows are for a moment: its virtue, its victory, its peace, are of the eternal. Live, and love."

Perhaps you tell me, "No such voice as that speaks to me in my sorrow." But at least there will come to you a message which is full, if not of consolation, yet of command. There are duties for you, services for you. You are to be not a spoiled child, but a man, a woman. All about you are other lives with needs as imperative as your own. You may make of your loss not a disablement, but an equipment. You have learned a new, great lesson. Henceforth, you should be more competent for that finest, most delicate ministration, sympathy toward those in trouble. A new temptation has come to you, a drawing toward the self-absorption of sorrow. Resist it bravely: let your loss be not a barrier but a tie with other lives. And, O my sad-hearted friend, just so surely as behind yonder clouds the sun is shining, so certainly will there issue out of this trial of yours, if only you will meet it as best you can, a good to yourself and to others greater than you now can think.

Greater than we can think,—that is the right

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word for the results which God brings out of faithful lives. Our acts play in and out like a shuttle in a vast web, of which at the most we see only the outer edge. The effect even upon our own characters of the lives we lead is something we cannot see or measure. Partly, we can read in the characters of others the effect of *their* lives. In the whole world there is no sight so beautiful, none that is so clear a witness of God, as the man or woman who as years advance grows more benignant, more tender, stronger, truer, sweeter, more at peace with life, more tranquil in presence of death. When we see such a one, we say, "That is worth living for."

Character, in its full sense, is the only thing worth living for. And emotion, save as it bears on character, is not to be much thought about or sought. I say this, because in speaking of faith I am reminded that many persons live in expectancy and desire of a *conscious* vivid sense of their sonship toward God. They want the rapturous calm of always seeing him, always feeling the divinity in life. I doubt if such high emotions come to any one except as an occasional experience. They depend largely on the natural constitution. Some of the very best people I ever knew did not have them at all,

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and some of the most melancholy wrecks I ever knew had a great capacity for them. A genius for spiritual insight and emotion is like other genius,— a great good when rightly employed, a fatal seduction when its exercise is made a substitute for homely fidelity. The rapture, the ecstasy of open vision, the clear and almost overpowering consciousness of a divine relationship and destiny,— this, should it ever come, may well be accepted with gratitude and reverence, and the light of such hours treasured in memory for the dimmer days that are sure to follow. But our attainment is not to be measured by the frequency and vividness of such moods, and they come best when they come unsought. Rapture is no essential part of that faith which is the deep necessity of man, and which is wrought out through the processes of life in the soul which reverently and loyally responds to the unseen worker and follows the unseen guide. Our business is to be faithful to the highest truth we know; and what we may look for in response to that is constant light upon the nearest duty, growing steadfastness of spirit, rising into buoyant cheer, and, as the years go on, a growing sense that life has brought us better things than we sought, a glad willingness to leave all with the Will which is better than ours.

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"Thy will be done,"—we say it at first, perhaps, in a forlorn and almost hopeless way, with a sense as of resignation to the inevitable. And at last it breaks upon us that that will is better than our own! We sought for pleasure, and we have found duty; we hoped that life might mean happiness, and, lo! it means love; we longed for a personal blessing, and we are made sharers in the blessedness of the universe. So, coming to see how God's ways are higher than our ways, we surrender our lives and the lives dearer than our own to a keeping which is better than ours. No longer in sad submission, but in gratitude in which sorrow is forgotten, in trust that has nothing to ask, we say, "Not our will, but thine, be done."

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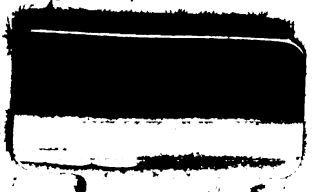

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